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- ★ Tigers Attack Colombo Harbour
- ★ Turning the Nightmare of Conflict into Peace
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– Voltaire.

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New Military Offensive

22 April – At least 30,000 Tamils are reported to be waiting at Kilaly to cross the Jaffna lagoon into the mainland as the Sri Lankan military backed by navy and air support launched the second phase of their offensive codenamed 'Operation Riviresa II' in the north against the LTTE on 19 April, the first anniversary of the commencement of Eelam War II. The objective of this operation is said to be to bring more areas presently under the control of the Tigers into government control and to open up a land route between the mainland and the northern Jaffna Peninsula.

As Sri Lankan forces pounded with air, artillery and naval strikes with thousands of troops pushing deeper into LTTE-controlled areas in the Jaffna Peninsula, a LTTE statement on 22 April said that three towns, Kodikamam, Chavakachcheri and Kachchai had fallen under the control of the military which was later confirmed by the government.

An indefinite curfew was imposed in the north on 19 April, and the authorities called upon civilians to take shelter in safe places such as churches, temples and school buildings and avoid places near LTTE bases.

Independent accounts of the fighting were unavailable because the government has barred journalists from entering the embattled north. The local media reporting on military related matters is subject to strict censorship imposed by the government on 19 April.

On the second day of the offensive, the army claimed that it had penetrated eight-km into LTTE-controlled areas in Vadamarachchi region in the Jaffna peninsula. At least 50 militants were killed and 80 wounded during the army's advance, the defence ministry said, adding two soldiers were killed and eight injured in the action. Troops recovered the bodies of 14 Tigers. A safe passage had been created for displaced civilians to return to their homes from Vadamarachchi and Thenmarachchi regions, it said.

However, the Tigers said on 21 April that military helicopters had opened fire on a crowd of Tamil refugees although the military predictably denied killing civilians. In a statement issued from their London office, the Tigers said helicopter gunships fired on refugees who had gathered near the Kilaly lagoon in the Jaffna Peninsula to cross over to the mainland. The dead and the injured were too numerous to count. All members of one family were wiped out and hundreds of others had been seriously injured, the statement said.

The military's claim that 15 boats with Tiger cadres were destroyed by helicopter gunships as they tried to cross the Jaffna lagoon was promptly contradicted by the LTTE which said that the boats were carrying civilians who were trying to cross into the mainland.

Those who managed to cross into the mainland are expected to join refugee camps in the Kilinochchi and Vanni areas already housing an estimated 200,000 civilians who fled Jaffna town before it was recaptured by government forces last December.

'The army might seal off the lagoon in a day or two', said a resident who arrived at northcentral Vavuniya. 'More than 1,000 families have crossed to the mainland.' The LTTE said in a statement all roads leading out of the area under attack were choked with civilians fleeing the fighting.

The curfew imposed on the region has prevented trucks carrying vital supplies from reaching the camps. Aid workers in the region are warning of an impending humanitarian disaster.

The army, advancing on four fronts, could be trying to trap Tigers and residents by capturing the lagoon crossing at Kilaly and cutting off the northern peninsula from the mainland in a pincer move.

Residents from Jaffna reported heavy shelling and aerial attacks and said troops advanced from three points into the eastern half of Jaffna while another column of troops thrust north from the Elephant Pass base at the entrance to the peninsula in a pincer move. One axis led from the Palaly airbase through Thondamannar to the Vadamarachchi division, where suspected Sea Tiger naval wing bases were being bombed by air force Kfir jets.

The other two axes led into the Thenmaradchchi division of the peninsula, through Madduvil and along the coast to Tanankilappu, near Chavakachcheri, residents said.

'The resistance from the Tigers was minimal as they started fleeing the area. We advanced 14 km (nine miles) and captured a very important Tiger base,' Army chief Maj. Gen. Daluwatte said in Colombo without giving details.

'Enemy resistance has not been heavy. They are harassing us with small arms, mortars and machineguns,' said a military spokesman. The advance by tank-led troops was slowed by a maze of mines and boobytraps planted by retreating Tigers, he added. Some 50,000 residents who stayed at home or in safe places like schools and temples were under army control, he said.

Journalist Rita Sebastian No More

Veteran Sri Lankan journalist Rita Sebastian died after a brief illness on 26 March. A former editor of the Times of Ceylon newspaper, Sebastian was the correspondent in Colombo for the New Delhi-based Indian Express newspaper,Inter Press Service(IPS) and Kyodo news service at the time of her death. Rita has been a regular columnist for Tamil Times for a number of years. Her funeral took place on 1 April.

A news despatch datelined 31 March from Colombo by the IPS, under the title, "Journalist Rita Sebastian No More" said as follows:

She survived threats, regularly put her life on the line, going beyond the day-to-day of journalism to try to bring people to their senses amidst the carnage all around.

Rita Sebastian was a fearless reporter and editor who lived through the darkest days of Sri Lanka's civil war and violence working to high professional standards that she set for herself through very trying times.

Rita was 61 when she died on March 29 after a brief illness. Hospitalised with broncho-pneumonia a week earlier, she died soon after returning home to recuperate.

As a journalist, Rita had to deal with the violence and terror of Sri Lanka's twin insurgencies: the Tamil separatist war in the north and the JVP insurgency in the south. And her fluency in Sinhala and Tamil made her a versatile reporter, much sought after by international news organisations for coverage of the conflicts.

Even as the wars polarized society and tore at Sri Lanka's socio-political fabric, Rita refused to be drawn into taking sides. She used to say that there was just too much bad blood in Sri Lanka for violence to be the answer.

Her moderate views, quest for truth and exposure of atrocities made Rita unpopular with extremists on all sides. She was often caught in the crossfire - sometimes literally as the time when she dodged bullets from both Tamil Tiger guerrillas and government helicopter gunships while covering the frontlines.

"Rita's death is a great loss for journalism in Sri Lanka," said Tamil member of Parliament and academic, Neelan Tiruchelvam,in a tribute today. "Her meticulously researched articles on the ethnic conflict were invaluable for academics as well as the general public."

She covered some of the most appalling massacres, mind numbing bombings and horrific executions (very often of people she knew well) with a deep reservoir of personal fortitude and compassion.

"Rita Sebastian was a pioneering woman journalist in Sri Lanka. She had reached the pinnacle of her profession," said the Foreign Media Association of Sri Lanka of which she was a member.

Even as her editors demanded antiseptic detachment and "objectivity" in reporting the events around her, as a Sri Lankan

Rita Sebastian was always deeply troubled by the bloodshed that engulfed her homeland.

"Inside her fragile exterior, Rita was a tough journalist who could take extreme mental and physical hardships in her search for the truth. She was ready to get up and go anytime anywhere for a story. She worked best under fire," said Kunda Dixit, regional editor for Inter Press Service in Asia-Pacific.

Despite a bout with cancer three years ago, she remained a warm and generous human being always ready to share all, and lived by a strong code of personal ethics, decency and morality.

After her journalism training in London, Rita started out as a features editor at the Ceylon Daily Mirror in early 1961. She became the first woman to edit the Sunday Times newspaper in Colombo and turned freelance reporter in 1987, serving as Sri Lanka correspondent for Inter Press Service, the Indian Express and Kyodo. ●

RITA SEBASTIAN - AN APPRECIATION

Ajith Samaranayake

Rita Sebastian, whose sudden death on Friday came as a shock to her colleagues belonged to the second line of women to enter journalism in Sri Lanka at a time when it was still very much a male club. Ranji Handy (later Senanayake), Jeane Pinto, Jean Moonesinghe and Sita Jayawardena (later Parakrama) were among the first brigade at the frontiers who refused to be confined by the gentility of the women's pages. This was a time when paternalistic notions held it that a woman's true place was the home and even if she dared do anything so scandalous as write to the papers she should confine herself to cookery, fashions, children and pets.

The fifties and the sixties with their more liberating winds of change saw a larger influx of women into journalism and not necessarily to the women's pages either. Rashan Peiris, Mallika Wanigandera, Vijitha Fernando, Hema Gunawardena, Chandra Silva, Sybil Wettasinghe, Eva Ranaweera, Sriya Ratnakata, Karel Roberts and Rita Sebastian belonged to this second line among both English language and Sinhala medium journalists.

Rita Sebastian began her journalism at the Times of Ceylon in the 1960's when it was dominated by such names as Felician Fernando, Fred de Silva, HERAbeysekera and Reggie Michael. She was an all rounder who could write as well as sub edit a page. She fetched the highest position available to her when she was appointed the Editor of the 'Sunday Times' although due to no fault of hers this was the twilight of the Times that newspaper having been taken over by the Government in 1977 and been run down by a succession of Competent Authorities. She was thus the first woman to edit a national newspaper although Roshan Peiris had briefly edited the Sunday Observer before the same Government had summarily dismissed her in the reign of terror of 1977. Rita Sebastian, however, flowered after her enforced exile from the Times. As a correspondent for foreign newspapers and news agencies she came into her own in the 1980's and 1990's

NEWS REVIEW

Tigers Attack Colombo Harbour

Suicide cadres belonging to the Sea Tiger Wing of the LTTE made a daring pre-dawn attack on Sri Lanka's primary Colombo harbour on 12 April arriving in two fishing trawlers laden with explosives and rocket-propelled grenades, according to reports from Colombo.

Both trawlers exploded and sank when the gunboats of the Sri Lankan Navy opened fire on them, and sailors believed at least ten attackers were killed, including two divers carrying explosives. Navy divers recovered the body of one rebel along with diving equipment. Officials claimed that one of the trawlers had entered the harbour when it was fired at and destroyed. The other had not yet entered and was trying to flee. Two suicide divers were blown up as they swam through the northern entrance to the port.

However, a statement issued by the LTTE from their London headquarters on 13 April claimed that six vessels were destroyed by their "Black Sea Tigers" in the attack.

Navy sources said sonar detected two divers swimming towards the harbour around 5.30 a.m.(midnight GMT). The suicide frogmen were blown up after sentries fired shots and dropped explosives into the water. Radar detected two boats inside the harbour's four-mile (6.5-km) security zone. One exploded at the northern entrance after a Dvora patrol boat fired on it, the sources said. The second (LTTE) craft was chased and sunk two or three miles (three or four km) out at sea, they claimed.

One Japanese car carrier and two Sri Lankan ships were slightly damaged by gunfire, port officials said. One sailor was slightly injured, and three merchant vessels anchored in capital's busy harbour were hit by the Tigers' rocket-propelled grenades, said Commodore Terrence Sundaram, Director of Naval Operations.

"I saw the (LTTE) boat and navy patrols exchanging fire," said Pedro Sapinas, a Filipino sailor aboard a car carrier which was slightly damaged in the attack. "I ducked inside the ship and looked through the porthole as splinters hit the deck."

The navy later exploded depth charges in the waters of the harbour entrance and searched the port for other rebels. Security also was tightened around the capital.

Colombo port is a leading transshipment centre in South Asia, and Sri Lanka's main foreign commercial link. Colombo port handled more than a million containers last year, about 70 percent of which was transshipment cargo.

Shipping Minister Mohamed Ashraff told reporters that the Tigers might have been targeting a liquid petroleum gas vessel in the harbour. The vessel, the Gas Tabangao, escaped damage because it was shielded by other ships, two of which were slightly damaged, Ashraff said.

However, according to Navy and port officials the Tigers might have been aiming for a ship that had unloaded aircraft parts for the island's airforce on the night hours before the attack. "The Tigers may have got intelligence about the arms ship which was originally meant to have unloaded the cargo for the airforce on the morning of 13 April," one official said.

Security at the port was stepped up recently after intelligence reports that the Sea Tigers were planning to attack the harbour, navy officials said. In this context, serious questions have already been raised as to the adequacy of the security measures taken in the face of the known threat, and how at least one LTTE vessel was able to penetrate into the harbour without being confronted earlier.

Nimal Maralande, the Sri Lankan agent for the Lloyd's of London insurance company, said the attack could reduce the number of ships willing to enter the harbour. "There is a immediate need to rebuild confidence," he added.

There was widespread apprehension that ship movements to and from and at the Colombo Port, described as south Asia's transshipment hub, will be affected by the Tiger attack. "We may not move ships for a while because of the attack. There may be some delay in the movement of some vessels. But we're working ships inside the port and it's a matter of time before our operations get back to normal. Our gates are open," a port official told the press. "We'll ensure additional security for the harbour," Minister Ashraff told reporters in an effort to ally fears that the attack would have an adverse impact on the harbour operations. "I do not think this will lead to a diversion of transshipment traffic. It may be a temporary setback. Insurance premiums may be increased."

Just as the authorities in Colombo were down-playing the extent and scale of the damage inflicted by the Tiger attack, the LTTE claimed in a statement released from its international secretariat in London on 13 April that they had destroyed six naval vessels in Colombo harbour. The statement said that nine of their "Black Sea Tiger" suicide squad were killed in the course of the attack and that three naval fast-attack craft and three

(conted. from page4)

which have been so momentous in the country's history. At the time of her untimely death she was Sri Lanka correspondent for the Indian Express and the Inter Press Service (IPS), the Rome-based Third World news agency. In the latter capacity she succeeded the late Richard de Zoysa. She was also the local correspondent for Kyodo news agency, Japan.

As a Tamil, covering the ethnic conflict, Rita Sebastian was particularly vulnerable (perhaps also because she was a woman) and had to make many sacrifices. A particularly vicious example of this was when a campaign was mounted to deprive her of her correspondentship of the German radio Deaf che Welle on the grounds that she was a LTTE supporter! But she took all this in her stride and in her shirt and jeans was one of the few reporters among both sexes to regularly visit the war-torn areas. Her knowledge of the on-going war was considerable. A very calm and gentle person she was nevertheless firm when necessary.

Rita Sebastian was the founder President of the Foreign Media Journalists organisation which was set up after a rupture with the Foreign Correspondents' Association which was seen by many local journalists contributing to foreign publications as being dominated unfairly by foreign journalists based in Colombo. It was a tribute to her position in the field by then that her colleagues (the bulk of them men) were ready to confer this accolade on her. Rita Sebastian did not marry and she faced many unhappiness in her personal life including the death of her sister some time ago stoically.

Most people in the profession did not know that she had been treated for an illness let alone that it was terminal. Only two Saturdays ago she was on the telephone to me to inquire whether the President had accepted the Opposition Leader's challenge to a debate on the Thawakkal issue. Two weeks later I am sitting in the same room writing her obituary. ●

supply ships were destroyed at 0130 local (2000 GMT).

"The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's Black Sea Tigers penetrated the Colombo harbour security zone and set off explosives attached to the hulls" of the six vessels which were destroyed, the Tiger statement said. But officials in Colombo described the LTTE's claim of being "figment of their imagination".

Lawrence Thilakar, the international spokesman for the LTTE speaking from their office in Paris confirmed that their "our target will be supply lines." "The targets will be supply lines to the government troops in the north and also weapons coming from outside to Colombo." When asked where he thought the weapons were coming from, Thilakar said "various places," giving Israel and China as examples.

Analysts in Colombo believe that the Tamil Tigers have raised the stakes in their war for independence with a bold suicide attack on Colombo port, heralding probably more strikes on Sri Lanka's economic targets. analysts said on Saturday.

"It is clear they are now going for economic targets to bring the country to its knees, knowing we're in a desperate situation, with the cost of the war already 40 billion rupees ($740 million) a year," said a former air force chief Air Marshall Harry Goonetileke.

The Tiger dawn raid by LTTE suicide boats and frogmen, repulsed by navy patrols, could force the already stretched navy to deploy more craft and troops to protect the vital port, Goonetileke said.

By these type of daring and at the same time desperate attacks sacrificing many of their trained specialist cadres in suicide missions, the Tigers are trying to force the military to reduce its commitment in the north particularly in the context of the much publicised planned offensive in the north against the Tigers.

Ever since the Central Bank attack in late January this year, it has been obvious the Tigers were trying to raise the cost of the war. Attacks in the south particularly directed at high profile economic targets result in devastating consequences for island's economy which had managed to sustain itself in a reasonable shape so long as the war was confined to the northeast.

The pattern of Tiger attacks in Colombo, including one on oil tanks just as the army launched a major offensive to capture Jaffna, and their intensified and frequent attacks on military personnel in the east showed they were timing their attacks with a view to force the government divert its attention and security forces to the aim of protecting the south.

The Continuing War

As the LTTE is mounting repeated attacks on the security forces in eastern Sri Lanka and also occasionally in the northern Jaffna peninsula, reports from Colombo indicate that preparations are under way for a major military offensive by government forces against LTTE positions in the Jaffna peninsula.

The *Sunday Observer* of 24 March reported that defense officials predicted that the forthcoming military offensive as the largest ever launched by the security forces in the north, the aim of which will be to capture more territory under the control of the LTTE. In preparation for the operation, they have acknowledged massive concentration of troops and heavy military equipment.

The projected operation, which is described as much larger than Operation Riviresa which ended in government forces capturing the Jaffna town and its adjoining areas, is expected to involve tens of thousands of troops, armoured columns and combined operations with aerial and naval support and elite special forces units.

For its part the LTTE which is not unaware of the massive military build-up is also making intensive preparations to resist the offensive. It is learnt that the Tigers have recruited to their ranks literally thousands from among those displaced from Jaffna and currently living in the LTTE-controlled Kilinochchi and Vanni areas. There are reports of a frenzy of training activity in the jungles of the Mullaitivu district, especially around Nedunkerny, which is now described as the nerve centre of the LTTE.

The recent statement attributed to Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte that the forces would end the ethnic war before the traditional Sri Lankan new year, common both to the Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus, on April 14, is viewed with much cynicism in political circles in Colombo. Similar statements have been made in the past by previous Presidents and Defence Ministers, and as usual the date would arrive and pass with the war continuing without any apparent end, an observer in Colombo said.

The military is modernizing desperately in anticipation that the war against the Tigers would continue. Huge Russian heavy-lift Antonovs land regularly at Colombo airport to disgorge Mi-24 helicopter gunships. And after the Tigers shot down several planes with missiles, the air force has acquired Israeli Kfir warplanes equipped with anti-missile systems and laser-guided bombing capability.

Police in Colombo claimed that they had found a powerful bomb in the capital on 3 April shortly after the city was put on high security alert for possible suicide bomb attacks by Tigers, and during a search for 12 Tamil Tiger suicide bombers who they claimed had infiltrated the city. In a pre-dawn raid, troops found four kilos (8.8 pounds) of plastic explosives, ammunition, two hand-grenades a timing device and five cyanide capsules, and a suspect was arrested,the defence ministry said. Identikit pictures of the 12 suspected bombers, drawn up after tip-offs from persons already in custody following the devastating Central Bank bombing, were released by the police. The authorities issued an appeal to the public to come forward immediately with any information and gave contact telephone numbers for investigators and military units handling security in the capital.

On a previous occasion, thirty kilograms of explosives were recovered near Seylan Bank in Old Moor Street in Colombo on 19 March. The explosives were concealed in a heap of garbage.

Recent reports from Colombo, quoting northern residents arriving in Vavuniya and Colombo, say that the LTTE was engaged in a frenzied exercise in withdrawing most of their military hardware, arms and ammunition and moving their close civilian supporters from areas presently under their control in the Jaffna peninsula.

"The Tigers are busy removing their weapons and equipment from the eastern half of Jaffna," said a resident who reached Vavuniya, a town in north-central Sri Lanka south of Jaffna, on 8 April. "Many boats were deployed in the past week to bring their stuff down to the mainland."

Known leading civilian supporters of the LTTE and their families were also leaving their homes in Vadamarachchi the northeastern part of the peninsula where the LTTE have bases for their Sea Tiger naval wing, and crossing the Jaffna lagoon to the mainland, he said. "Others have not yet joined the exodus of their supporters," said the resident. "They are unable to decide but are packed and ready to flee as soon as the operation starts as they fear the lagoon crossing may be sealed," he added.

A statement issued by the LTTE's London office on 30 March said that, Mr Balakumar, a prominent member of the LTTE political wing addressing a meeting at Kilinochchi Central College while referring to Chandrika Government announcements, alerted the Tamil people to the danger of the Sinhala government's final preparations for a war to be

launched any time now, to totally destroy the Tamil race in Sri Lanka.

In this military operation, the Sinhala armed forces will destroy large numbers of Tamils and cause wide spread destruction to their property. In addition to attacking the Tamil people living in Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi, the Sri Lankan armed forces have also made plans to march into Kilinochchi from Vavuniya. In executing this plan, the Tamil people living in Vanni Tamil mainland will also be severely attacked, the LTTE statement added.

A LTTE statement broadcast on the "Voice of Tigers" radio on 5 April claimed that government forces had postponed a planned major military offensive in the north because of the loss of some 400 men this year and damage to military hardware."The Tigers destroyed three navy fast-attack craft including an Israeli-built Dvora, damaged an air force MI-24 helicopter gunship and levelled an air force camp," during the first months of 1996, the radio said.

Meanwhile, the frequent aerial and naval bombardment ostensibly directed at so-called LTTE positions in the north continue to result in civilian casualties. A case in point is the bombing in the fishing village of Nachchikudah in the Mannar district on 16 March by the Airforce in what appeared to be an indiscriminate retaliatory attack following the LTTE attack on naval gunboats on the previous day.

The accuracy of the reported claim by a military spokesman in respect of this incident that at least 30 Tigers were killed by an Airforce helicopter gunship attack on a Sea Tiger base at Nachchikudah in the Mannar district on 16 March is seriously disputed. Kilinochchi Government Agent, S.Thillainadarajah, in a despatch to Colombo stated that ten civilians were killed on the spot and five others died after admission to hospital. Forty seven people were seriously injured and seventeen others sustained minor injuries. The victims belonged to a fishing community displaced by the fighting in the north.

The LTTE in a statement released in London stated that it had been established that 16 Tamil civilians were killed and 64 persons seriously injured, in the fifteen minutes attack carried out by two Sri Lankan MI 24 fighter helicopters on the Nachchikuda coast in the early morning darkness at about 4.30 AM on 16 March.

A three month old baby, 9 women and 6 men have been killed in this attack. The injured have a poor chance of recovery as most of them have lost their limbs and their eye sight which cannot be restored. The affected people are all originally from the areas of Navanthurai, Kayts, Gurunagar, Passiyoor and Jaffna in Valigamam who were forced to flee in the wake of the military offensive in Jaffna last November. Most of the victims were fast asleep when the early morning attack took place. They had no chance of escape. Hundreds of huts and sheds were reduced to ashes by incendiary bombs, the LTTE statement said.

Expecting a repeat attack by the Sri Lankan Airforce, 60 families who were living as refugees in Nachchikuda in Mannar have now fled their homes and have taken refuge in the nearby Kumulamunai church after the 16 March helicopter attack. 172 families displaced from the army occupied Valigamam and the islands off Jaffna peninsula are settled in Nachchikuda in Mannar. The whole community is in deep shock after the helicopter attack. Most of the huts in which the people lived have been burnt down by rocketfire and new shelters have to be provided for the homeless, the LTTE statement added.

There have been reports of many incidents of clashes between government troops and the Tigers in the Valigamam region within the Jaffna peninsula, a region which is claimed to have been brought under military control. The fact that, on the military's own admission, that several soldiers and scores of Tigers are being killed in violent encounters between the belligerants indicates that either Tigers are present in large numbers in the so-called recaptured areas or that they are in a position to penetrate those areas in large numbers at the time of their choosing.

Small bands of Tiger infiltrators are believed to be hiding in the areas controlled by the army, planting landmines and staging hit-and-run attacks on government troops, military officials said. In recent weeks, according to military sources, navy patrols have intercepted and sunk several rebel boats in the northern waters believed to be taking supplies to guerrillas operating behind army lines.

The military admitted that the Tigers killed six government soldiers in a pre-dawn attack on an army post on 16 March at Weli Oya in the northeast of the island. At least eight Tigers also died as the army fought back, calling in air force helicopter gunships, the military claimed.

In a statement released in London, the LTTE said that the Salampankulam Sri Lankan army camp which is situated in middle of the Manalaru (Weli Oya) area has been totally destroyed by the LTTE forces at about 12.30 AM in the middle of the night on the 16 March. Ten soldiers and home guards were killed and 10 more military personnel were injured as the camp was destroyed. Arms and ammunition were seized from the Sri Lankan forces. Two LTTE freedom fighters, Capt. Ulakanambi and Lt. Kathirkaman, were killed in this operation.

Tigers killed 14 soldiers in a landmine attack in the northern Jaffna peninsula on 18 March in the first big rebel attacksince the capture of the Jaffna town in November last year. The soldiers were travelling in a tractor that detonated a pressure mine planted by the Tigers in Mallakam - a small town claimed to be under the control of the army - about 10 km (six miles) north of Jaffna town. The mine was believed to have been laid by the Tigers who infiltrated the area.

In regard to the Mallakam incident, the LTTE in a statement issued from its London office said that a 76 year old woman was killed and 4 people including two children were seriously wounded on 18 March when Sri Lankan army stationed in Valigamam (Jaffna district) rained down artillery shells towards Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi areas of Jaffna district. It seemed that these indiscriminate artillery shell attacks on civilian targets were carried out by the army in retaliation to the successful land mine attack on an army vehicle by the LTTE forces within the army control Valigamam area of Jaffna district and this attack took place on the morning in Mallakam and 18 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed in this attack.

Tigers attacked a military base on an island off northern Sri Lanka on 20 March killing seven soldiers and injuring five more, military officials said in Colombo. The soldiers repulsed the attack by the Tigers, who arrived in boats on the Kayts Island in their mission. At least 18 Tigers were killed in the encounter said Maj. Tilak Dunuwille, a military spokesman.

The military, expected to launch a new offensive against the Tigers, warned civilians to stay away from rebel camps likely to come under attack. The military was asking civilians in the north and east to stay away from known camps as these were likely to come under artillery or air attack without notice, military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told a news conference on 28 March. The warning came a day after the LTTE claimed air force jets and artillery had pounded the Vadamarachchi and Thenmarachchi areas in the northern Jaffna peninsula."The Sri Lankan armed forces fired barrages of artillery and mor-

tar shells over a wide area of the thickly populated Vadamarachchi and Thenmaratchi districts," an LTTE statement issued in London said.

In continuing their campaign of military attack on Vadamaratchi, the Sri Lankan armed forces fired barrages of artillery shells, into a wide area of Vadamaratchi on 29-03-1996 during the night from 1.30 AM to 3.00 AM. The armed forces also fired lots of Parachute Lights into the night to light up the area. The terrorised people from the villagers of Kerudavil, Thondamanaru and Valvettiturai who received the brunt of this night attack, fled their homes to safety in the middle of the night, the LTTE statement added.

A military spokesman said that soldiers on a search and clearing operation killed 41 Tigers in two separate encounters on 4 April. Five soldiers were killed and two officers and 14 soldiers wounded in the two incidents in two villages, Sangarathai and Sandillipai, in the in the Valikamam region. The army recovered a cache of arms and equipment from the dead Tigers, including and rocket- propelled grenades and radio sets.

A military statement said that in one incident the Tigers attacked the soldiers as they were carrying out clearing operations, but when the troops encircled the attackers, they took refuge in a Hindu temple. The military threw smoke bombs into the temple to flush out the Tigers and opened fire. The Tigers returned fire, killing five soldiers and injuring 16. The military said it recovered the bodies of 41 rebels.

On 2 April, in an encounter between the forces and the Tigers, the army killed 14 Tigers, including eight women, in the village of Manipai, a few kilometres (miles) north of Jaffna town, a Defence Ministry statement said.

Tigers guerrillas attacked a Sri Lankan naval convoy in northern waters on 30 March, killing a sailor and damaging two vessels, defence sources said in Colombo. "Sea Tigers' belonging to the LTTE attacked the convoy between Vettilaikerny and Mullaitivu close to the northern Jaffna peninsula, they said. According to military spokesman Maj.Tilak Dunuwille, 10 sailors, including two officers, were killed and 10 more wounded in the attack and he claimed at least 35 Sea Tigers were also killed. A navy boat was destroyed when it was rammed by an explosive-laden Tiger boat, killing and wounding the sailors. The attack was later repulsed with the help of air force helicopter gunships, said Dunuwille.

Supplies Hampered : Meanwhile it has been reported that food and other essential supplies sent from Colombo to Tamil refugees in northern Sri Lanka have been hampered because both the Tamil Tigers and its rivals belonging to another Tamil group, PLOTE (Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam), were extorting money from truck drivers. The LTTE said in a statement on 3 April that extortion by members belonging to PLOTE had disrupted the flow of food supplies to the north. It said trucks carrying food and roofing material to refugees had been held up at north-central Vavuniya, north of which is Tiger-held territory, after payments to PLOTE cadres were stopped. A Rehabilitation Ministry official was quoted as saying that truck drivers were reluctant to take supplies across as they feared being harassed after the government, which hires their vehicles, stopped the extortion payments, adding, "The supply of food has not come to a standstill but has slowed," he said. "Monies were extorted by both the LTTE and allegedly by the PLOTE."

The LTTE in a statement issued from its London office on 18 March said that armed Tamil quisling groups - an euphemism for its rival groups - who work for the Sri Lankan army are demanding large sums of money at the various check points and barriers around Vavuniya from Tamil travellers and the lorries that carry food to Vanni areas. Convoys of food lorries are held up for several days in Vavuniya without passing through the check points as the drivers of the lorries are finding it difficult to find the sum demanded. Complaint has been made to the Sri Lankan Commissioner of Essential Services but it is doubtful whether he can do anything about this.

A statement issued by the LTTE on 4 April said that the resident French doctors from Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) have informed the Killinochchi health authorities that their stay in the Killinochchi hospital is pointless without surgical equipments. At present patients in need of surgical care are taken to the Vavuniya hospital through Thandikulam Sri Lankan military check point and soldiers manning this military check point do not permit these transfer of patients that easily. MSF doctors have said that they do not want to stay idle in Killinochchi without performing the operations which are urgently needed. It will be a tremendous loss to the Tamil people if these MSF doctors are to leave Killinochchi. The Killinochchi hospital is already struggling to cope with large numbers of patients specially after the arrival of refugees from Valigamam.

In the meantime, foreign aid agencies and NGOs working in northern Sri Lanka among refugees are reported to be preparing for a fresh influx of refugees from the Vadamaradchi and Thenamaradchi areas of Jaffna in the wake of reports of a fresh army offensive and the call by the LTTE to the civilians to leave those areas and cross into the mainland Vanni region.

The LTTE also said that people in Kilinochchi areas have started building bunkers in their homes and in public places to protect themselves from aerial bombs and artillery shells which are being directed by Sri Lankan armed forces on the people living in the area. Many business and Public institutions in the area are also giving material and financial help to the people to build bunkers.

A statement from the Tigers on 4 April that the Sri Lankan armed forces poured volleys of artillery shells into the residential areas of Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi for the second week in succession in preparation for their declared new military offensive in the area. The Sri Lankan armed forces stationed at Palali and Vettilaikerni have been shelling the entire civilian areas with their long range artillery guns. The worst hit are the villages of Thondamanaru and Kerudavil in the Vadamaratchi district and Eastern sections of Thenmaratchi and Eluthumadduval in the Thenmaratchi district. This new round of army shelling has accelerated the flow of Tamil refugees out of these districts and into the Vanni Tamil Mainland.

Air raid shelters, bunkers and underground bomb shelters are being built in Vanni Tamil mainland to protect theTamil people from Sri Lankan military attacks With the increasing number of Sri Lankan Military flights over the Vanni Tamil mainland and with the Sri Lankan war planes attacking Tamil civilian targets, the people of Vanni are not taking any chances. Air raid shelters and bomb shelters are being built by the people in their homes and all over in public places such as Schools, Markets, Community centres and Street junctions, the LTTE statement added.

In the meantime, the Tigers have intensified their attacks on the security forces in the east of the country. It is in eastern Sri Lanka that government forces have been losing heavily in recent months. "The biggest blow (for the military) has been from the Tigers clans attacking military personnel, posts and patrols in the east over the past couple of months," one analyst said.

The Tigers dealt another blow against government forces on 5 April when they killed 16 police commandos belonging to the Special Task Force on a road- clearing mission near the village of Kohombagastalawa in eastern Amparai district in eastern Sri Lanka.

Human Chain : Tens of thousands of

people in northern Sri Lanka formed a human chain and urged the United Nations to pressure Colombo to cancel a planned offensive against Tamil Tigers in the north, a broadcast from the LTTE's Voice of Tigers radio said.

The demonstration on 10 April in which an estimated 200,000 people linked hands, stretched some 32 km (20 miles) from Chavakachcheri to Point Pedro in the northern tip of the Jaffna peninsula.

Residents said the demonstration was organised by a group of traders' and fishermens' associations backed by the LTTE. The organisation sent a message to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali urging him to persuade Sri Lanka to find a political solution to the problem and call off an expected offensive, the radio said. The demonstrators chanted slogans demanding the withdrawal of government troops from the peninsula to allow displaced civilians to resettle in their homes and to resume talks with the Tamil Tigers, radio added.

The human chain demonstration was intended "to draw the attention of the world to the colossal loss of life and large scale destruction of property" during any offensive. Pupils, clerics and shopkeepers participated in the protest, said a LTTE statement issued from its London office.

Devolution Proposals : Sources in Colombo say that the discussions relating to draft Devolution Proposals in the All Party Parliamentary Select Committee (SC) are progressing satisfactorily. Studiously, the Committee has put back the discussion of controversial issues like the unit of devolution, the power of the President to dissolve the proposed Regional Councils etc. with the intention of consensus being reached on other general and non-contentious amendments to the Constitution.

Speaking at the presentation of pensions to fishermen on 3 April, President Mrs.Kumaratunga appealed to all political parties not to sabotage the devolution process but to suggest improvements to her government plans. She believed that the majority of the country's people supported the concept of devolution and the need to solve the genuine problems of the Tamils and added that the country needed political leaders who set aside the vote catching mentality in tackling a national crisis.

The president stressed that the government troops were not battling against "our Tamil people" but against the LTTE which had unilaterally declared war against the government. The government had in fact acknowledged that Tamils had genuine grievances which should be redressed without delay, she added.

Emergency Extended

In the runup to the local government elections to be held shortly in Sri Lanka, the government imposed a nationwide state of emergency on 8 April which up to now had been confined to the war-torn northeast of the island and its capital Colombo and adjoining areas. The ostensible reason given for the government's move is that it wants to prevent alleged attacks by the Tigers about which the police claim that they have reportedly received reliable reports.

"The government is taking action to hold local elections without delay and in such a manner that available security personnel could ensure full security for all its citizens," a statement issued by the Presidential Secretariat said.

A nationwide state of emergency invests the President with enormous powers to promulgate regulations including for the purpose of cancelling the local elections scheduled for June this year.

Some opposition politicians suspect that the local elections, due to be called by June, might be put off."It seems most likely that they want to cancel the elections unless they have learned some information of a possible rebel attack in Colombo," Chanaka Amaratunga, leader of the Liberal Party, told the press, adding,"They may feel the security situation in the country does not warrant the holding of elections."

The Opposition Leader, Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe, does not see the need for the extension of the state of emergency and has hinted that the government's action reflected an intention to manipulate the outcome of the election by the use of extraordinary powers including limitations being placed on the freedom of the opposition parties to conduct their campaign.

If the local election is to take place as scheduled in June, then it would be the first acid test of the government's popularity since in came to power in August 1994 defeating the United National Party which ruled the country for the previous seventeen years. The opposition parties cannot be said to be popular among the people at present to inflict a defeat upon the ruling Peoples Alliance at the local election. But in case the election is postponed or cancelled, then the opposition will seek to obtain as much political milage it can against the government for its anti-democratic move. "The opposition will love this. It means they don't have to test themselves at the polls but they can criticise the government for pulling out of the democratic process," a PA member of parliament lamented.

Suspension of Radio Broadcasts : Media groups Sri Lanka criticised a recent government ban on news broadcasts by a private radio network after one of its stations announced a non-existent island-wide curfew.

The Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka said in a statement that the punishment was "far in excess of the crime" and had been imposed despite the station having corrected the item within seven minutes of its incorrect broadcast.

The Information and Media Ministry on 11 April ordered Colombo-based MBC Networks to suspend local and foreign news broadcasts. It did not say how long the ban would last.

The popular radio station Sirasa FM three days earlier announced that the government had declared an island-wide curfew. In fact, the government had extended its emergency laws to cover the whole country. The network admitted that the broadcast had caused confusion and anxiety among the population but that it had been a mistake.

Following the broadcast two journalists from the station were taken into custody and charged with bringing the government into disrepute and broadcasting false news. The two journalists have also been summarily dismissed by the broadcasting company, Maharaja Broadcasting Company.

The Free Media Movement, while recognising that reporting over such a widespread and influential medium such as radio that an island-wide curfew had been declared, when it fact it was the proclamation of the state of emergency island-wide was a gross violation of the basic professional requirements of checking and verifying a story from the proper authorities, expressed grave concern at the decision of the government to suspend the company's broadcasting licence.

Comparing the action to those of the previous government, the FMM said that it could be an indirect threat and intimidation to other media organisations as well. The FMM also condemned the detention of the journalists under emergency regulations and urged the government that any action taken against the journalists should be under normal laws which relate to the wrong reporting of facts and news.

Dissolution Overruled By Courts

President Mrs.Kumaratunga was faced with severe political embarrassment when the Sri Lankan Court of Appeal on 27 March held her action unconstitutional in dissolving two Provincial Councils controlled by the opposition United National Party (UNP).

The North-Central and Sabaragamuwa Provincial Councils were dissolved on the advice of the Governors of those provinces on January 3 on the basis of allegations of corruption and misuse of funds.

Following the dissolution, the government announced it would hold fresh elections for the two dissolved councils in March. However, the Chief Ministers of the dissolved Councils instituted proceedings in the courts challenging the constitutional validity of the dissolution. In late January the Court of Appeal of the island, made an interim order prohibiting the government from calling for nominations or holding fresh elections to the Councils until the case was finally determined by the Court. And its final determination was that the President's action was unconstitutional.

One commentator said that the decision of the Court reflected the new atmosphere in the country unlike under the previous regime when the judiciary was under a great deal of executive pressure and intimidation. "This also proves the independence of the judiciary, which is something this country sadly lacked. It shows our judiciary now has the freedom to rule against decisions of even the President," said a political observer in Colombo.

Besides the mere political embarrassment for the President and the government, at a time when the government has launched its devolution proposals for granting more autonomous powers to the proposed Regional Councils, the action of the President in dissolving the Provincial Councils and the consequent decision of Court the have highlighted the question as to the extent of the power of the President ought to possess in any future constitutional arrangements vis-a-vis the Regional Councils.

Power Cuts Due to Drought

The government is planning new thermal power plants to reduce dependence on hydropower and is considering power cuts after monsoon rains failed to arrive, government officials said on 19 March.

Foreign investors will be invited to build a 300 MW coal power plant estimated to cost $800 million and a 150 MW diesel plant costing $150 million, said Leslie Herath, chairman of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), the state power utility. "We're now going in for a more reliable form of power generation," he told the press.

Sri Lanka has a power-generating capacity of about 1,250 megawatts, 80 percent of which come from hydroelectric plants and the balance from diesel-run plants, CEB officials said. No new power plants have been built in Sri Lanka in the past six years despite a steady 10 percent rise in demand for electricity every year, they said.

The business community has repeatedly complained that government delays in building plants could lead to a power crisis in the event of drought and seriously undermine the export-driven economic plan.

Herath said the government would also re-advertise for fresh offers for a 300 MW coal power plant to be built in the eastern port of Trincomalee after Canadian investors pulled out. A 40 MW diesel power plant being built at the existing Sapugaskanda power station will come on stream early next year, he said. The CEB was in the final stage of talks with German engineering group Kloeckner-Humbodt-Deutz (KHD) <KHDG.F> to build a 51 MW plant costing $64 million and scheduled to come on stream by mid-1998, he added.

The CEB had also appealed to the public to conserve power to stave off power cuts, he added.

The country spent 3.5 billion rupees ($66 million) on oil imports to fuel thermal plants last year, three times the usual oil import bill, Herath said.

The daily power cuts in Sri Lanka have forced factories to switch to diesel-fired private power generators, raising the island's diesel consumption, according to the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corp (CPC) said. Most of the factories are using small private generators as they want to continue with their work.

The failure of northeast monsoon rains, which resulted in extremely low water levels at Sri Lanka's hydro-power reservoirs, forced state-owned Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) to impose daily power cuts from March 22. This has resulted in additional consumption of gas oil (diesel) in recent weeks causing a fall in the island's stocks.

The higher diesel demand for April prompted CPC to move forward the delivery dates of its latest purchase tender invitation to April 29-30, instead of May 3-4. The tender, which closed on April 10, would be awarded shortly. The volume has also been raised from 150,000 barrels to 165,000 barrels for diesel and from 40,000 barrels to 45,000 barrels for jet fuel.

The tender, which attracted only two offers, would likely be awarded to MidEast-based BB Naft. The offer price for diesel was $1.88 a barrel above Singapore spot quotes and jet fuel at 88 cents premium on a cost-and-freight basis to Colombo.

With this tender, Sri Lanka's diesel imports for April are around 400,000 barrels, and 145,000 barrels of jet fuel. Sri

Lanka bought nearly 600,000 barrels of diesel in March when its hydropower reservoirs were disrupted. In a normal month, the island state usually imports less than 300,000 barrels of diesel.

The initial four-hour daily power cuts were extended to five hours on April 2 and CEB is now considering imposing six-hour daily cuts because water levels have continued to fall alarmingly. The board said in a statement on April 2, the move to impose further cuts was prompted by consumers adjusting their electricity use around the blackout periods instead of saving energy, which could lead to complete blackouts before the end of April.

The CPC source said even though scattered heavy rains have started in recent days, water levels at the reservoirs are still very low.

Birthday Gift for Mrs.B

The Sri Lankan Parliament passed a special legislation 8 April nullifying a 1980 resolution that deprived former and current Prime Minister and the then leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Mrs.Sirimavo Bandaranaike of civil rights for six years.

The resolution was tabled by Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris. Opposition Leader and leader of the United National Party (UNP), Ranil Wickremesinghe led a walk out in parliament as the debate on the resolution got under way.

Following the victory of the UNP in the 1977 general election after which J.R.Jayawardene became the Executive President under a new Constitution, he appointed a Special Presidential Commission to investigate alleged misuse and abuse of power under the earlier government of which Mrs.Bandaranaike was the Prime Minister. In 1980, Mrs. Bandaranaike was found guilty by the SPC for misuse and abuse of power following which the then Parliament dominated by the UNP adopted a resolution depriving her of her civil rights for seven long years.

There was little doubt in the opinion of political observers at that time that the deprivation of Mrs.Bandaranaike's civic rights, including her right to participate or vote at elections, was a deliberate ploy on the part of President Jayawardene to prevent her challenging him at the presidential election in 1982.

"The government felt that it would be fitting to take action in the present parliament to ensure that a historic injustice

is rectified in an appropriate manner," Peiris said.

Plantation Workers to Strike

Emerging trends point to the government facing renewed labour unrest in the upcountry plantation areas. A 6-day "token strike" of estate workers is to launched from April 22 to 27 by the CWC in association with the Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union (LJEWU).

The CWC, which was in coalition with the previous UNP regime since 1977 of which its President Mr.Thondaman was a cabinet Minister and supported the privatisation of the management of tea estates, seems to have developed an aversion now to the privatisation scheme.

The CWC has written to the Speaker of Parliament requesting an opportunity to debate the privatisation of the management scheme. The CWC vice President, Mr.H.P.Sathasivam, told the press that his organisation was not fully in agreement with the government's privatisation programme adding that the estate managements needed to be strictly controlled so that the plantation industry could be saved from any possible collapse.

"We are averse to the present management of the estates by the companies. We extended our whole-hearted co-operation at the beginning but it now appears that the companies do not even want to consider certain demands put forward by the trade unions. This is a clear indication that the Ministry of Plantation Industries has no hold or control over the companies," Mr.Sathasivam added.

The workers are pushing for an eight rupee (15 cent) a day pay rise and guaranteed 300 days' work a year in the country's massive tea, rubber and coconut plantations, which are gradually being taken over from the state under a huge privatisation exercise.

The Secretary General of the Ceylon Planters Association, Mr.S. Seneviratne said the strike would result in crop losses which could significantly erode management companies' profits. "The country will lose an enormous amount of money especially at this time when prices are fairly stable," he said.

The 300 days work per year demand has come under fire by the management companies which say some estates are way overstaffed while productivity has hit bottom. "Three hundred days may be workable on some estates, but not all," Seneviratne said. "If unions agree to move the work force to where there is work, then we can achieve a more favourable land-to-labour ratio, which in turn may provide more work for more people."

Meanwhile President Kumaratunga has agreed to try to mediate a settlement before some 600,000 plantation workers go on strike. Saumyamoorthy Thondaman said he met Kumaratunga to discuss the issue."We had a meeting. We discussed whether we can't find a way to solve this dispute," he told the press.

"The government has promised to examine the situation, discuss the matter (with plantation management companies) and come back to me on the 16th," said Thondaman, who is also Rural Industries Minister. "If there is an understanding and a settlement in light of the discussions we have had, then there is no need for this action," he said. However, a six-day token strike will begin on April 22 if negotiations do not yield results, he added.

Thondaman accused the plantations' management companies of running down the estates by not investing in re-planting and not adhering to proper agricultural practices. As a result, the number of work days has been reduced, Thondaman said.

"This must be the only country in the world where workers are demanding more work and management is saying no," he added.

Industry analysts say the estates cannot afford to grant workers guaranteed work or a wage increase due to high production costs and low yields. ●

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WINNING THE PEACE: A COSTLY ENDEAVOUR

By Indra de Soysa (Ph.D. Student in International Relations the University of Alabama, USA)

Now that the "battle for Jaffna" is won, it might be prudent to put things in perspective, before people start getting carried away, becoming myopic to the ultimate realities. History teaches us, as Fred Ikle's (1985) apt book title suggests: "Every War Must End." The ending of "a battle", however, does not necessarily mean the "War" has been won. If this were the case. Germany would have won both World Wars, Japan would have defeated the US at Pearl Harbour, and the Southern United States would now be referred to as the Confederate States of America. After all, the oft quoted, yet rarely followed Clausewitzian dic tum, "winning the war but losing the peace," is historically borne out time and time again, most notably the blundering of the victorious powers at Versailles after WWI. Versailles after all paved the way for WWII twenty years down the road, indeed causing some to correctly treat the two events as one (Carr, 1939). Then there was the blundering by the victorious superpowers that followed the end of WWII which led to a greater calamity known as the"Cold War,"a misnomer, if ever there was one, because it was enormously costly in terms of lives and resources, and it threatened to annihilate all mankind. These lessons should serve as a clear reminder that the "peace" can indeed be very easily lost, rendering the celebrations of a victory by the Sri La nkan government and the population at large rather premature. Remember that the bullhorns sounded in Berlin with the fall of France in 1940.

In two successive articles published in the Lanka Guardian recently, I argued why a political settlement without the Tigers was impossible because they held the balance of power vis-a-vis other Tamil political parties, and that any peace was impossible without their participation and acquiescence. I argued in effect that the only option was Low Intensity Containment, a strategy akin to the global strategy that was followed by the US against the Soviet Union. A "a battle for Jaffna," I predicted would be a rather costly endeavour, a great expenditure in terms of men and material to get back to square one. Hoisting the flag over Jaffna, it is clear now, is not going to demoralise cyanide-capsule-carrying fanatics like the Tigers. They have already vowed to carry on the struggle brother means, means that they are good at and which the government forces will not be able to counter easily. It will be back to "warfare on the cheap" for the Tigers. The Sri Lankan army's superiority in firepower terms will not be a factor any more, and more lives are going to be lost in more and more frustrating ways. From the relative safety of defence lines, the government forces have, at great cost, hoisted themselves up from a defensive position to be "sitting-ducks" once again. The war has not been won, and the peace has yet to be determined. Peace, such as that which the European diplomats sat down at Versailles to make is quintessentially a political act, and let us not forget Clausewitz's most famous dictum: "war is the continuation of politics by other means." It necessarily follows thus that peace is the continuation of war by other means. The soldiers have ostensibly "done their job," now the politicians must succeed in theirs. The balance of power in favour of the Tigers is upset only temporarily, necessitating quick and decisive action by all moderate parties in politics if a lasting solution is to be reached.

What psychological factors do the politicians face? The battle for Jaffna undoubtedly is a cathartic experience for much of the Sri Lankan population. As Joachim Habermas has pointed out, violence carried out by armed forces is an extension of the will of the entire society that symbolically identifies with them. In other words, each individual's violent desires are satisfied by proxy in the violence carried out by the forces. Witness the way in which many moderate Tamils in Colombo were somehow offended by the offensive, despite it being directed against the hated Tigers. Thus, there is a psychological logic in wars of attrition that degenerate inevitably to mass violence perpetrated by grou- ps against each other, the entire society participates in one way or another. This is a phenomenon that initially satisfied many Sinhalese vide the numerous pogroms against the Tamils, until of course the Tigers started their own brand of violence.

The Sri Lankan experience, thus, is not devoid of this psychological factor. We are all guilty of secretly tallying the score in terms of body counts whenever skirmishes between the Tigers and the armed forces were reported in the newspapers. I knew one wayward Sinhalese soul who deliberately enjoyed reading the mis-information in the Daily News because it was more satisfying to read doctored accounts than having to read that more government soldiers died rather than Tigers. Similarly, despite the loss of hundreds of young Sri Lankan men in the latest fighting, others back in the relative safety of the south can celebrate the capture of Jaffna, all that matters is that more of "them" are dead the capture of Jaffna itself matters little, nor do the political consequences to follow. This psychosis is precisely the way in which the Tigers became "the boys" of almost all Tamils, the way in which the Tigers became "the boys" of almost all Sri Lankans when they were killing Indians (Prabakharan earning the distinction "man of the year" in the LG), not to mention the way in which respectable Sinhalese reluctantly deplored the atrocities committed against Tamils in the numerous pogroms as mentioned earlier. We can add also, the shameless way in which "Colomboites" turned a blind eye to the extralegal killings during the JVP insurrection - us against them - until that violence suddenly hit close to home with the abduction and murder of one of their own, Richard de Zoysa. Until we acknowledge this psychological logic, I am afraid, no meaningful steps towards peace can be taken, nor the gargantuan political task of building a lasting peace successfully undertaken.

If there is a psychological logic to the mode of violence, how might we overcome this to bring about peace? First, let me reiterate the point made above - peacemaking is inherently a political act, the soldiers can only perpetrate violence to enhance the possibility. Thus, in order to break with the logic that has driven the communities (and fictionalised groups) to this comparative psychosis that secretly finds sustenance in the violence that is carried out by their chosen group of "boys", the political leaders, both Tamil and Sinhalese, and all the other political parties will have to make a conscious and sincere effort to come together with the primary purpose of eradicating violence as a weapon. The government, which has the largest capacity for perpetrating violence as a weapon. The government, which has the largest capacity for perpetrating violence, will have to ensure the safety of every individual, regardless of affiliation, from harm and afford redress from injustice. This would be the foundation upon which a comprehensive "meeting of minds" can rest. In other words, the time is ripe for rebuilding "civil society."

Current events have come to a head because just such a meeting of minds had already taken place after the tumultuous era of Indian intervention and the JVP

insurrection. What seemed to be the indomitable UNP was defeated primarily as a result of this political realignment that placed a high premium on peace, this despite great fears that the new government would be bad for the pocketbooks, that the PA era would see a reversion to the SLFP era of the 1970's. It is in this context that the election of the People's Alliance and Chandrika Kumaratunga as president must be analysed. There was clearly, in Sri Lanka, a revulsion of violence factor, a revulsion stemming from the bloody period following the JVP insurrection in the late 1980's lasting through the early 1990's and all of this followed very closely by a string of assassinations in the heart of areas where people had felt safe before. The "Colomboites" were jolted out of their complacent participation in the perverse psychological logic that fuelled a war of attrition. Is there any wonder that it was Vietnam Vets that started the peace movement in the US while the vast majority of people tallied the body- counts at home in front of the TV's - living room wars are comfortable!

Nevertheless, assuming that the realignment means a "meeting of minds" in terms of ending violence, what can be done politically The PA administration has taken a major step towards addressing the underlying problems of this conflict by offering significant devolution of power to the North and East - the so called "Union of Regions." This is a good start and its time to look a bit further - What is required for reconstructing a society that accepts these changes responsibly? And what will prevent a break-down of "normalcy" in the future? I suggest that the current crisis stems from the breakdown of democracy - in Robert Dahl's terms a gradual shift away from "polyarchy." According to Dahl, most of the advanced democracies of the world where violence is minimal and normal politics prevail are polyarchies. A polyarchy is a form of democracy where competition and inclusiveness are high, but a system that will not survive (especially in a multinational state) if there is no sense of legitimacy for the forms and processes of the system and if political activists are unable to co-operate. This is the essence of harmony in Holland according to Arendt Lijphart who argues that the Dutch place a high-premium on "accommodation," and many others have argued similar patterns for Sweden and even India where the notion of "synthesis" is actively practised. The crucial variable for accommodation, however, is the realisation by all parties that they have more to gain from co-operation than by confrontation. The problem may be framed in a "prisoners dilemma" framework.

In a prisoner's dilemma game, two prisoners (A & B) have committed a crime and are interrogated separately. If they own up, they get a lighter sentence than if they were prosecuted. The options for the prisoners are to own up or blame the other and get off lightly. Thus, if A blames B, B gets punished and A gets off. If B blames A at the same time, the authorities have a solid case against both and ostensibly both get the maximum term in prison. Thus, the best option for both A & B is to co-operate by owning up and getting a lighter sentence. Owning up, however, is a factor of "trust". That is, A and B will both own up if they trust one another not to blame the other, because if A owns up and is also blamed by B then A will take the full punishment. What I have demonstrated in theoretic terms is the importance of trust among political activists if indeed building polyarchy in Sri Lanka is going to be feasible. Winning the peace in Sri Lanka is going to be feasible. Winning the peace in Sri Lanka crucially depends upon the building of "trust" among the disparate political activists involved in politics, and I argue below effective ways in which the state can rebuild trust.

Despite the political realignment that reflected the desire for peace in Sri Lanka, the peace initiative seems to be wholly state-led. This causes a rather large problem of credibility because the ultimate miscreant in this whole nasty business is the state, or viewed as such by many. The reason, partly, of the massive exodus from Jaffna and the apprehensions of many Colombo Tamils is due mainly as a result of this credibility gap. Thus, is it possible for a state-led peace initiative to be convincing?

The Zeitgeist around the globe presently is certainly based on the realisation that the state must recede and "politics" minimised. Yet, how can the state ensure the construction of civil society? The cardinal virtue, indeed the very pillar on which "civil society" rests is the rule of law. Thus, reconstructing the rule of law in Sri Lanka is perhaps the most pressing task.

As many have argued, Sri Lanka practices a form of "democracy," where unfairness in legal terms was left up to successive legislatures to decide. Such a system is highly conducive, as it has proved to be, to be manipulated and abused by the democratic process itself. The "will of the majority" easily tramples on the "rights of the minorities," often the driving force behind this process being democratic party competition. Indeed, SWRD Bandaranaike's "Sinhala only" policy was a manifestation of the electoral exigency of creating what Anthony Downs (1956) has called a "passionate majority." SWRD paid the ultimate price unfortunately when he tried to rectify what he had done. In any case, a system that tries to control law through legislation will inevitably be highly coercive, terribly inefficient (such as what the Soviets tried to do with their economy), and would lead to disaster. Thus, it is time for Sri Lanka to take the path of adopting laws based on universal norms, rather than that determined by the popular will which is often pernicious. It is time to adopt laws that would apply equally to all, following Immanual Kant's universal rules of just conduct. It is time that all parties realise that preferential treatment (in this case the preferred are the majority, unlike in the USA where it is a minority that has been discriminated against in the past), is a recipe for disaster and counterproductive for everybody in the long run. Today, it must be recognised that the legislative path, as F A Hayek has argued, is "The Road to Serfdom" - Sri Lankans especially could attest to this fact. Thus, the legislative path will not provide the comfort that distrusting minorities or other political opponents seek, making it imperative that the state begin addressing the need for universal norms and for building trust - this is what will win the peace and ensure polyarchy in Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, peace does not automatically follow winning on the military front. If a stable peace is to be achieved in Sri Lanka, the underlying problems that caused the conflict in the first place have to be resolved. It is argued here that those problems will only be solved by reconstructing polyarchy - a highly inclusive and competitive system of democracy. Yet, because of the system and the resultant history of violence, polyarchy will be difficult to construct without a high degree of trust among political activists belonging to all the disparate groups. Trust is especially hard to build because of the inherently comfortable psychological factor that governs individual psyches in wars of attrition. It has also been argued above that the problem can be framed in a "prisoners' dilemma" game where it is now beneficial for all contesting groups to co-operate rather than confront, but co-operation is dependent on trust. Hopefully, the devolution of power proposed by this government is going to be the foundation upon which this mutual trust and security can be re-built - the most crucial aspect for rebuilding polyarchy and a lasting peace in Sri Lanka. Only this achievement will justify the needless expense of life and resources our nation has incurred in the past years.

This is a plea to all Sri Lankans to accept accommodation-it benefits us all. Let us bring some"riviresa"to the entire island so that "sudu-nelu" may bloom. ●

TURNING THE NIGHTMARE OF CONFLICT INTO A DREAM OF REALISABLE PEACE

by Dr.S.Narapalasingam

Despite the rising casualty figures, since the resumption of the current phase of the civil war in April 1995 the only "statistic" quoted repeatedly by the foreign and local news agencies in their bulletins is the vague static number "more than 50,000 have died in the 13-year ethnic war". An alternative figure of "more than 40,000" is also cited by some foreign news agencies. It is too vague and hence useless to grasp fully the mounting human losses and miseries endured by the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities since 1980s. The casualty figures provided by the military establishment after any violent clashes do not also reveal the cumulative effect of the war on the ordinary people, who are the ones paying the price for the numerous blunders committed in the past by their leaders for narrow political gains. Those who have not learnt anything from the costly mistakes of the past continue to obstruct the political action needed to prevent further escalation of the losses already incurred by all communities.

The people on whose behalf the war is claimed to be waged are unaware of the long-term implications of the losses incurred separately by each community to their own future well-being. The fact that the cost of reconstruction must be borne by the people themselves, regardless of who has been responsible for the destruction, by greater sacrifices than before on many fronts has also not been effectively driven home. As the losses are the result of internal war, there is no possibility of receiving war reparation from any source.

A recent report on the 1994 human tragedy in Rwanda gives a candid reminder that humanitarian assistance is not a substitute for political action. Internal unrest and economic development are incompatible phenomena and the horrible feature of persistent unrest and the lack of development is that either one tends to fuel the other. The lower growth rate and higher inflation observed in Sri Lanka are in sharp contrast to the optimistic forecasts of economists made at the end of 1994, on the assumption that a peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict would release funds used hitherto to finance military expenditures for productive investment (the peace dividend) and further the serene environment would attract foreign direct investment. In addition to the human miseries (not reflected in available statistics) resulting from the war, the brunt of the economic hardships are intolerably on the poor, displaced, sick or infirm persons in Sri Lanka. None of the conventional economic and social indicators can give a vivid picture of the conditions under which the affected people live in Sri Lanka.

Persons for whom the society, **half of its members live below the poverty line,** provides for their livelihood (in some cases much more than sustenance) are least affected by such deprivations and sufferings and it is, therefore, not surprising that they are the ones who are craving for war by spreading imaginary fears and communal hatred to be seen as the protectors of their race and faith. They can only retain this role by steadfastly continuing to obstruct the constitutional reform that would devolve powers to minority groups in Sri Lanka.

The nationalism that was actively promoted after independence was counterproductive to the two main objectives of keeping the country united and making its economy strong and prosperous. It had a very narrow aim, namely, to win the support of the electorate. This could only be achieved, under the unitary system of government, by rousing nostalgia, introducing divisive policies that please the majority community and yielding to the pressure tactics of those portraying themselves as the guardians of Sinhala-Buddhists. Certainly, the civil war in Sri Lanka is not between the ordinary Sinhalese and Tamil people. All governments have claimed that it is not between the State and the Tamil people either. However, the victims of the war are the people, either as civilians or as recruits/conscripts most of whom are from poor families. A peculiar situation exists now in Sri Lanka, in which instead of the democratic government elected by the voters in all the communities, two extreme groups among the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Tamils claim that each is the protector of their respective community. The former expects the government to rule by proxy, adopting its policies.

Dr. Amarasiri Weeraratna in the Sunday Observer (SL) of March 17, 1996 has quite forthrightly stated "The Government has to be run by the elected Members of Parliament. There is no room in the constitution to give into pressure tactics of reactionary monks. We have to respect the Sangha only when they teach us the Dhamma in which they are experts and authorities". He has quite rightly pointed out that "They are not experts in political science and their knowledge of international political problems and constitutions is poor. Their opinions on the ethnic problem and democratic ways and means of settling it cannot be taken seriously." It is astonishing that even the bulk of the intelligentsia in Sri Lanka has condoned the Maha Sangha's practice of compelling governments to adopt divisive policies that obstruct peace, communal harmony and social and economic development of all the communities in the country. The exercise of overriding powers by the Sangha in adopting national policies has subverted the democratic process and the constitutions of Sri Lanka. Importantly, it is a divisive force in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. By succumbing to the (un)holy dictates of the prelates, governments have been inviting national disaster.

Tamil nationalism that evolved as a countervailing force to Sinhala nationalism, following the adoption of the divisive policies and discriminatory practices had the same destructive effect on national unity and the economy. When it became violent, the self-destruction of even the wealth of the Tamil community accumulated over a period of several decades through hard work and great sacrifice was thoughtlessly considered to be of no consequence. The consequences of some of their actions in the long run are detrimental to their own (declared) goal.

"What Discrimination?"

The few learned propagandists within and outside the clergy, who cannot recognize the grievances of the minority Tamil community and even reject the existence of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka should unlock their minds first and then examine objectively some of the policies implemented and practices followed by the various governments after independence that impinged on the rights of Tamils as equal citizens of Sri Lanka. Additionally, they should also consider the official policies declared to alleviate those grievances of the Tamils accepted by the governments as genuine, but not implemented in full.

It is mind boggling that they are more interested in drawing conclusions from the less uncertain events of thousand to two thousand years ago than those known with certainty during the life-time of many of us living now. Perhaps the more recent history of Sri Lanka has not been given prominence, that many positive contributions of the Tamils to promote unity and harmony are ignored. The most significant step taken by the Tamils

on their own free will towards this goal was to teach Sinhalese language to the students in all the schools in the Tamil heartland. The teachers were none other than the Buddhist priests. This move was sabotaged by the adoption of the chauvinistic "Sinhala Only" policy, ignoring the opposition of the minority communities and the progressive Sinhalese politicians.

The change from the use of English letters to the Sinhalese letter "Sri" in motor vehicle number plates served only to antagonize the minority communities, while displaying Sinhala chauvinism. It did not improve one bit the quality of life of the Sinhalese people and instead resulted in economic loss following protests and disturbances. The system was changed after several years by replacing the Sinhalese letter with the hyphen. There was not even a whimper from those who were misled to believe that the use of the Sinhalese letter would change their lives for the better! Such political gimmicks, whether intended or not, helped to divert the attention of the people from the real economic problems.

To those who are "unaware" of any racial discrimination, a sample of the policies and practices that contributed to the Tamil perception that they are no longer treated as equal citizens of one united country having the same rights as the majority Sinhalese is listed below:

* The first move to exert the ethnic majoritarian authority in governing Sri Lanka after independence was the enactment of the Ceylon Citizenship Act in 1948 and the Ceylon Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act in 1949, both of which respectively made over a million up-country plantation Tamils stateless and disenfranchised them.

* On the national flag issue, one would have anticipated that following independence from foreign rule under the Union Jack, the newly independent Sri Lanka would adopt a flag that commanded the acceptance, respect and allegiance of all the people of the island. But that was not to be. The Lion Flag was imposed, precisely for the expressed reason that it was the traditional flag of the majority Sinhalese, with two green and yellow stripes at the margin to represent the Tamils and Muslims as if to symbolically underline the emerging trend to marginalise the ethnic minorities.

* The passage of the Sinhala Only (Official Language) Act in 1956 contrary to the spirit of the first constitution of independent Ceylon, placed the Tamils and other non-Sinhala minorities in disadvantaged positions with regard to employment, promotions and all official dealings with the State organs. Immediate political mileage was, however, obtained in successive parliamentary elections by implementing related discriminatory policies, forgetting that the seeds of separatist demand were being sown at the same time.

* The State-aided colonisation schemes in the predominantly Tamil speaking areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces witnessed the settlement of literally tens of thousands of people belonging to the Sinhala community resulting in the gradual demographic transformation of these regions. In the background of the implementation of policies and measures which the Tamils perceived as designed to marginalise them, the State-aided colonisation schemes were viewed by them as a deliberate ploy to turn them into a minority in areas in which they were a majority.

* Despite switching from English to the native languages - Sinhalese and Tamil - as the media of instruction in schools, colleges and universities, the problem of the disproportionately high intake of Tamil students to the universities was "solved" in the 1970s by the implementation of an openly discriminatory media-wise standardisation of marks secured in the qualifying examination for admission to universities. To put it briefly, the scheme enabled a student belonging to the Sinhala community to gain admission to a university with lower marks than his counterpart belonging to the Tamil community.

* The non-violent methods of protests by the Tamils against the racially motivated policies were responded by the State directly and indirectly by recourse to violence, as evident from the several anti-Tamil riots that took place since 1958 in which many lives were lost and Tamil properties destroyed. Those responsible for the arson that destroyed the famous Jaffna public library and its valuable collections in 1981 were not just ordinary Sinhalese hooligans, but had the patronage of the State.

* In drafting and enacting the 1972 and 1978 Republican Constitutions, not only the voice of the Tamil minority was ignored, but also many of the discriminatory legislative measures enacted previously were elevated to be provisions of the Constitution.

Exclusion and Expediency

Having contributed to the polarisation of the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, the division was sustained by continuing the principle of excluding Tamils from senior and politically sensitive positions in Government. Political affiliations and race were important criteria for new appointments and promotions in the public service. Merit became a secondary factor at the cost of foregoing efficiency. It was far more important to be seen by the Sinhalese electorate that Tamils were not in charge of matters on which their well-being and security depended. This is not to deny the fact that a few Tamils have served, during the period when the politics of exclusion was in full swing, in very senior administrative positions and even as ministers but their presence could not make any dent in the onward march of the practice and politics of exclusion.

Similar restrictive policies stifled competition in the national economy resulting in economic stagnation, high unemployment and low living standards. Had the national "cake" been expanding, distrib uting the increase differently without denying any particular group some share of it would have been less repulsive. But what happened was totally revolting, since there was no expansion the then government policies were aimed at redistributing the existing wealth by taking away some from a section of the people. The worst hit by such policies were the then politically powerless up-country Tamils. The fact that their status improved after they were able to wield political power supports the case for power-sharing with the minority communities.

National economic benefits were often ignored for the sake of hitting hard at the Tamils. Before the removal of import and foreign exchange controls, approvals for starting new industrial ventures and allocation of funds for raw material imports to existing small industries were all not based on economic criteria. The racial/regional factor influenced the implementation of these systems penalising the Tamil entrepreneurs and the Tamil regions. Later, under the pretext of implementing free market policies, cheap chillies and onions were imported at the height of the harvesting season in the North so as to hit at the Tamil farmers.

There has been a yawning gap between the declared principles/policies of governments claiming impartial treatment to all citizens and the manner they are actually observed/implemented by their establishments. This persistent gap has given rise to the perception among the Tamils that they do not count in national politics. Thus, the idea of separation has been forced on the Tamils by the very Sinhala "patriots", who do not wish to see the division of the country. There are many explanations for this contradictory position of the Sinhala nationalists. One is their attitude that they own the whole country and the minority ethnic groups can live in their country on terms dictated by them. Flowing from this arrogance is the perception that the minorities can be subdued by deceit and deception. With this attitude, the need for lateral sharing of power at the apex with the minority Tamils essential for preserving

communal harmony and the unitary system of government disappeared. The politics of exclusion was not only contrary to this system in a multi-ethnic country but was also dangerously destructive as to encourage secession by force.

Delayed Solutions

The above policies and practices were later abandoned or reversed after causing much harm to the very concept of a unitary multi-ethnic state and motivating the demand for the division of the country. The subsequent changes introduced appear quite significant from the standpoint of the conditions that prevailed when the divisive policies were popular among the Sinhalese electorate but their effect much later on restoring unity and harmony, in what was acclaimed as "paradise on earth", can be succinctly stated as "too little because too late". The cost of postponing rational political decisions is also apparent from the extent of devolution currently being offered from the limited autonomous powers agreed but not implemented since the abrogation of the B-C and D-C Pacts by the then Sri Lankan governments, following the opposition of the Buddhist clergy and Sinhala nationalists.

Equally relevant to the present discussion is the hostile and sometimes punishing attitude towards the Tamils by past governments and various organs of State, particularly those responsible for security and the enforcement of law and order. How the Tamils are treated scornfully and humiliatingly by them in contrast to the Sinhalese citizens may obviously appear untrue or imaginary to those who are not interested in knowing the experiences the many Tamils have endured during the periods of emergency rule. Some think that such inhuman measures have also been taken to put down the JVP uprising in the South and hence there is no racial discrimination! They need to ask themselves whether all the Sinhalese in the South were suspected of being members or supporters of JVP and whether collective punishment by way of economic embargo and the like were meted out to the Sinhalese in the South. All Tamils residing outside the North-East have also now become vulnerable to "special treatment" following the recent bomb attacks in Colombo attributed the LTTE. Prof. N. Shanmugaratnam's encounter with the "Defenders of the Nation" (pp.6 & 7 of the T.T. of March'96) reflects a reality that Tamils face and the account must be read, especially by those unable to understand the plight of other Tamils who are less known, less educated and not fluent in Sinhalese.

What Choice Now?

The present situation reminds me of a parable narrated by my school teacher very long time ago. A quarrel started between a farmer and his wife who were surviving from the only income accruing from selling the produce in their banana plantation. As the quarrel reached a climax, the farmer in a fit of uncontrolled temper grabbed the garden knife went straight to the farm and started felling the trees one by one in such a fury he had no time to think of his action. The wife saw this and wanted to show him that she too was capable of teaching him a lesson. She picked up another knife, tucked up her saree tightly and began executing the same destructive job vigorously. Both were so engrossed in their tasks, they did not have realise the consequences of their common action, let alone talk and settle their differences in a rational manner. Their neighbour who happened to watch this self-destruction fervently proceeding rushed to their plot of land and shouted at the top of his voice to halt their actions for a minute. He asked them "don't you realise what both of you are doing?" You are destroying your own livelihood. What will you do when both of you become destitute persons? Suddenly both realised the folly of their actions and each began to weep throwing up their hands in the air. Fortunately, the neighbour saw the destruction early before the whole plantation was destroyed and the couple consoled each other and promised to work jointly and even harder than before to improve their lot.

There are many lessons in this story that are relevant to the internal conflict continuing in Sri Lanka. Tens of thousands of lives have been sacrificed in vain on both sides. Over a million people have been displaced and forced to live in appalling conditions. The scale and extent of destruction of the infrastructures needed for normal life is enormous. Even if the conflict is to stop now by some miraculous reason, the country and its people, both Sinhala and Tamil, are not in a position on their own to meet the cost of reconstruction and rehabilitation. On the other hand, what is happening is that the people, both Sinhala and Tamil - within the country and abroad - are being called upon, indeed forced, to pay for the continuation of this self-destructive armed conflict.

The stark fact is that the longer and more intense the state of belligerency is, the more difficult it is for each side to have trust in the intentions of the other, let alone reach an amicable settlement.

Instead of talking calmly with the view to settle the internal differences, the antagonists have allowed their entrenched positions to determine and justify their separate actions. Unlike the well-wishing neighbour in the parable, there are the agitators in both the communities who are interested in intensifying the feud for different reasons. The price of the very extreme solution sought by the Tamil rebels analogous to dividing the banana plantation, which has already been partially destroyed, must also be considered rationally. The partitioned plot, on the presumption that the other joint owner is agreeable to any form of partition, cannot be physically moved elsewhere away from the rest of the land. Even if and when divided, the two plots will have to remain side by side where they have been for ages. Apart from the economic loss resulting from fragmenting the productive land, both parties will have to divert sizeable amount of their limited resources towards security as the belligerent situation will continue even more intensely. This will have to be at the cost of forgoing faster economic development and higher living standards of the people in both plots.

The root cause of the conflict can also be removed by a mutually acceptable and foolproof arrangement, where the power to govern and develop the economy is shared in a just manner by the different ethnic groups. Therefore, the underlying issue basically boils down to that of sharing power and not dividing the land. If both parties in the genuine spirit of reconciliation can come to a constitutional settlement, where the land is developed jointly and the income generated is shared in a just and equitable manner. all communities stand to benefit in many ways. This should be the key issue that must be addressed at the present time. The majority of the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people living permanently in Sri Lanka expect nothing less from those who wield whatever power acquired through democratic or other means, because it is the people who are paying the price for the destructive actions of their so-called leaders.

The crucial question whether the present nightmare of conflict can be turned into a realisable dream of peace. At this testing time the present generation of leaders on both sides must have the courage to resist the pressures of the extremists, the prime wreckers of the peace and tranquility the people of all communities yearn for. Will those leaderships in the South who claim to represent the majority Sinhala people and those in the North claiming to represent the Tamil people have the courage to move away from entrenched positions to seek a mutually acceptable accommodation to effect a change to the present unitary constitution so as to achieve meaningful devolution of powers to enable the different communities in Sri Lanka to co-exist as equal partners within a union of regions without being

A NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION FOR SRI LANKA?

By Suriya Wickremasinghe,
Secretary, Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka

The protection and promotion of human rights in Sri Lanka needs strengthening; of this there is no doubt. The Civil Rights Movement nevertheless has certain queries and reservations about the proposed National Human Rights Commission as envisaged in the measure currently before Parliament. These relate both to the general concept and context of the proposal, and to particular provisions of the Bill.

General concept and context

The idea of setting up the Commission appears to have originated from the United Nations which in 1992 by resolution reaffirmed the importance of effective national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, and recommended principles that should govern their establishment. The previous government took this matter up, discussions were held at the All Party Conference, and a draft prepared. The present Bill is a continuation of and implementation of this policy of the previous government. It did not arise from any special demand voiced by local or international human rights organisations.

Existing Institutions

A number of existing state or state-sponsored institutions the function of which include matters relevant to the protection or promotion of human rights already exist. These include:

1. The Supreme Court
2. The "Ombudsman"(Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration)
3.he Human Rights Task Force
4.The Human Rights Task Force
5.The Human Rights Centre of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute
6.The Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental RightsThe Law Commission

In addition, there was the Commission on Involuntary Removals appointed on 11 January 1991 to investigate disappearances that took place after that date, and the three Commissions currently investigating "disappearances" from 1986.

Before creating yet another institution, one would have expected a careful survey and evaluation of the work of the existing ones, to see how they relate to each other, to examine how far their work is complementary, whether there is any overlapping, and if there is overlapping, whether this is desirable. If any of the institutions are not functioning effectively one should study the reason why, and see whether it can be remedied by measures such as providing better infrastructure, increased powers, etc. One would also expect an examination of recommendations made by such bodies, and appropriate follow-up action. The Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental Rights, for instance, has over the years gained considerable expertise in its particular field of activity. It has made recommendations. It has also found itself unable to fulfill its role in important respects, due to lack of infrastructure and additional staff and support facilities. It is important that we make use of existing expertise and learn from past experiences. Otherwise there is a danger of creating new institutions which may not only cover part of the same ground, and perhaps make recommendations which are not acted upon, but which will also go through the same growing pains, to find again they are hampered by lack of infrastructure etc. We welcome the fact that such a process of identifying weaknesses and strengthening existing structures has already been commenced in the instance of the office of Ombudsman, where an amending Act has been passed. A natural result of this development, however, is to lessen the need for the Human Rights Commission now envisaged.

The example of the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental Rights

It is worth dwelling further on the example of the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental Rights to which we have already referred, as it illustrates well the problem we have in mind. This Commission was not renewed when the term of its members lapsed at the end of 1995. Presumably this was in view of the intention to create a national Human Rights Commission. The undesirability of proliferation of official bodies dealing with human rights, a concern which has been voiced by many and which CRM shares, possibly influenced this decision. CRM remains concerned, however, that a proper examination of the work of and problems faced by this Commission and the other bodies mentioned by us earlier should precede any decision about a National Human Rights Commission.

The Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental Rights was established in 1986 and its members, appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice, have included persons of competence and dedication who have given a great deal of their time and abilities to their work. It has made several important recommendations based on its experience over the years. Public officials have at times sought to resile from undertakings given to the Commission to settle a complaint, it has therefore asked for legislation to make such settlements enforceable through the civil courts.

The time limit for entertaining complaints has been found "harsh, impractical and unduly restrictive," therefore the Commission has requested discretion to hear complaints made within "a reasonable time." The Commission's powers of mediation where complaints are made to it direct are limited to issues involving discrimination, whereas when the Supreme Court refers matters to it these can relate to other violations of human rights; the Commission has asked that this anomaly be rectified. It has called for review of the policy of issue of visas to non nationals married to Sri Lankans, which it found discriminatory and based on "Victorian notions." The Commission studied areas where complaints have been frequent, and as a result decided to issue guidelines to eliminate discrimination in appointments, promotions and transfers, and to hold training courses for public officials to promote awareness of how to avoid unreasonable exercise of discretionary power. Neither of these projects, however, could be implemented, due to lack of staff and support facilities. Time and time again, from its very first annual report, the Commission has underlined the lack of infrastructure, support staff and other amenities necessary to enable it to

(Continued from page16)

deprived of their identity and aspirations to a secure and better future? If they fail and continue to commit the same costly mistakes of their predecessors highlighted in this discourse, there will be little hope of any better living conditions in the foreseeable future for the vast majority of the population in all parts of Sri Lanka. The present nightmare will continue making a return to the peaceful times of old an unrealisable dream.●

fully perform its role including its research functions.

Strengthening the Normal Legal System

It is crucial that attention be given to strengthening the normal legal system. On this CRM wholeheartedly endorses the position of Amnesty International when it says that:

"The creation of a national human rights commission can be an important mechanism for strengthening human rights protection but can never replace, nor should it in any way diminish, the safeguards inherent in comprehensive and effective legal structures enforced by an independent impartial and adequately resourced and accessible judiciary. The creation of such a human rights commission should go hand in hand with a thorough review of existing legal and other human rights institutions in order to make these more effective instruments of human rights protection. These initiatives should be accompanied by a determined government policy aimed at holding the perpetrators of human rights violations fully accountable, thus ensuring that those who violate human rights cannot do so with impunity."

Our existing legal system needs to be strengthened in two important ways. One is to remedy defects and omissions in the existing laws and procedures. The other is to see that such laws and procedures are in fact implemented. These are specific needs to which the attention of successive governments has been drawn frequently by non governmental human rights organisations both in Sri Lanka and internationally. Unless this is done, with determination, seriously and without delay, the creation of a National Human Rights Commission risks appearing little more than a cosmetic operation which, moreover, may divert attention from the real task.

To mention just a few examples - the need for independent machinery to examine complaints against the police, to replace the present system of having to complain to the police itself, was stressed by the Basnayake Commission Report of 1970, which even prepared the draft legislation for this purpose. This need has been stressed repeatedly by human rights organisations (including by CRM since its inception in 1971). The inaccessibility of emergency regulations is another matter to which attention has been drawn again and again; CRM has often asked that the law be amended to require these to be published in the national press. The need for a law creating basic minimum standards governing persons detained under special legislation has likewise been repeatedly called for by human rights organisations (again including by CRM since its inception in 1971). Constant criticism of emergency regulations relating to arrest and detention led to a series of amendments in recent years which provided some safeguards. Places of detention were required to be authorised by the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence and lists published in the Gazette, Magistrates were required to visit detainees, "receipts" were required to be issued on arrest. Yet detentions in unauthorised places continued. Magistrates did not visit places of detention, the issue of "receipts" (or the alternative procedure of making an entry in the police station explaining why this could not be done) does not always take place. Failure to observe such provisions is an offence, yet there has not been a single instance, so far as CRM is aware, of an official being prosecuted for non compliance.

Rules about Custody-A Case in Point

CRM's point may be illustrated by expanding on one of the examples given above. When persons are held in a prison, specific laws govern their rights, namely the Prisons Ordinance and the Prison Rules made under that Ordinance. These govern a wide variety of matters in considerable detail such as visitors, correspondence, diet, bedding, clothing, medical attention, bathing, exercise and so forth. Conditions in our prisons are nevertheless far from satisfactory, but there are at least these legal standards which one can try to have enforced and improved. Any official inspection of a prison, including visits under the Prison Visitor system provided for by the Ordinance, thus has some yardstick to go by.

Persons held under the emergency regulations or the Prevention of Terrorism Act, however, can be, and often are, held in placed other than prisons, where no such laws apply. In this context, giving the Human Rights Task Force or the new National Human Rights Commission the task of monitoring the welfare of detainees or visiting places of detention is clearly insufficient, and is in a sense to put the cart before the horse, If it is not possible to accord all detainees all the rights spelt out under the normal law, at least the basic minimum standards to which they are entitled must be laid down by law. Then, certainly, the question of inspection and the implementation and supervision of the legal rules created, must be entrusted to an effective body. Furthermore, the climate of impunity which has affected Sri Lanka for so long would indicate that the question of the creation of the office of an independent Public Prosecutor for human rights violations should receive high priority.

Particular observations on the Bill before Parliament

It is in the context of, and subject to, the issues of general principle set out above, that CRM offers some observations on the Bill.

Appointment and removal provisions - Clause 3(2) and 4(b)

These need to be revised to ensure that the Commission is independent and is manifestly seen to be so. The Bill provides that as an interim measure, pending establishment of the Constitutional Council, members of the Commission shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister in consultation with the Speaker. There is here a preponderance of politicians, all of whom are likely to be of one party. (Contrast the Commission for the Elimination and Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental Rights created under the Sri Lanka Foundation Act, under which appointment is in consultation with the Chief Justice). Provision should be made for participation in the appointments process of not only judicial authorities but also of political parties and independent non political persons and bodies concerned with human rights outside the government. Likewise the removal provision should not make the opinion of the president the deciding factor in whether there is a conflict of duty.

Fundamental Rights - a Broader Interpretation Needed

The Bill empowers the Commission to enquire into allegations of violations of the fundamental rights declared and recognised by the Constitution of Sri Lanka (Clause 10 and 13 read with Clause 32 of the Bill). However, the present Constitution does not embody all the rights enshrined in the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which we are by international law bound to observe. The latest draft of the revised constitutional provisions are a considerable improvement but there are still deficiencies. The functions of the Commission should not be restricted to those rights recognised by the Constitution, but should encompass all those rights guaranteed by the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other accepted UN norms and standards.

Special Inquiries and Investigations

The powers of the Commission should not be limited to investigating individual allegations of infringements of fundamental rights. It should, of its own volition, or on representations made by non governmental human rights organisations, be able to investigate a situation or incident in any part of the country where it has reason to believe human rights violations may have taken place. It should also inquire into and review particular administrative practices and

policies.

Investigative Unit

The Commission is empowered to carry out investigations but it is unclear as to how, in practice, this can be done. The part of the Bill which deals with staff (Part III) should specifically provide for the creation of an independent and effective investigating unit.

Public Statements and Appeals

The Bill envisages the Commission reporting annually to Parliament (Clause 29) with no requirement that the report be published. This is insufficient. The Commission should publish its own reports. It should also be empowered to make interim or special reports, public statements and appeals from time to time as the need arises.

Regional Offices

Provision should be made for the establishment of regional offices as human rights violations often take place far from the capital city, and people in such areas tend to be less able to seek remedies.

Independent Funding

It is good that the salaries of the members of the Commission are to be charged to the Consolidated Fund and cannot be reduced while they are in office. It is also encouraging that there is a provision that "the State shall provide the Commission with adequate funds to discharge the functions assigned to it by this Act [Clause 28)1)]. This, however, may not be sufficient to ensure the effective and independent functioning of the Commission. For this, it is necessary that a means be devised to ensure that the Commission should "not be subject to financial control which might affect its independence" (Principles relating to the status of national institutions adopted by the UN in March 1992).

Investigation of Terrorist Acts

This is the responsibility of the law enforcement authorities of the country and not an appropriate task for a National Human Rights Commission. The provision that the Commission may investigate "an allegation of the infringement or imminent infringement of a fundamental right... as a result of an act which constitutes an offence under the Prevention of Terrorism Act..." [Clause 13(b)] should be deleted

Arrested Persons

In the drafting, a protection accorded to arrested persons under the emergency regulations has inadvertently been weakened. The emergency regulations require an arrest to be notified to the Human Rights Task Force "forthwith" but goes on to specify that this must in any case be not later than 48 hours from the time of arrest or detention." The Bill merely requires reporting to the National Human Rights Commission "forthwith" [Clause 27(1)]. ●

CASE FOR A REFERENDUM IN THE NORTHEAST

Professor Kopan Mahadeva

Mrs Kumaratunga's PA Government has submitted its Devolution Package for a new Union of Regions in Sri Lanka to the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) in January 1996, in the form of its Legal Draft. Such an action was long overdue, but is recognisable even at this stage although it is most unlikely to meet Tamil expectations for the reasons given below. In any event a copy should be sent at least now to the LTTE with whom the President is manifesto-wise bound, to negotiate a solution to the Tamil ethnic problem.

This article highlights the yawning gap between what is expected and what is planned, and to point out that a lot of time, trouble and expense could be averted if timely action is taken via a NE-Referendum to first find out what would in fact satisfy Tamil demands, before the PSC finalises its recommendations to Parliament for further action.

Tamils of Sri Lanka consist of Ceylon Tamils who form the majority, Upcountry Tamils, and Tamil-speaking Moors. Though they reside all over the island, the greater proportion of them live in the Northeast and follow three of the four religions of the island which are also major world **NE Region**

The fact that the present NE-Province forms the traditional homeland of the Tamils was the basis for the 1957 B-C Pact, the 1965 D-C Pact and the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987. The majority of even the Tamils who live in the other regions of Sri Lanka or abroad, like Mr Laxman Kadirgamar and this author have our cultural and ancestral roots in the NE and consider it our Heartland within the larger motherland of Sri Lanka. Hence it is only logical and democratic to constitutionally accept the NE-Province as a predominantly Tamil Region and welcome the Tamils in this, their spiritual and cultural home and space, to live in equality with the Sinhalese in the island. The Tamils will then be happy to concede the predominant position of the Sinhalese in the rest of the island.

Form of Government

It was out of frustration created by broken promises and dishonoured pacts during the post-independence decades, and the horrors imposed on them by the inter-ethnic war of recent years that the Tamils desperately feel they could survive and be happy only in an entirely independent state of their own. But it appears that the Sinhalese want to live with Tamils in a reconstituted Union of Regions.

The LTTE, leading the struggle for Tamil rights, have confirmed that Tamils would consider a federal-type governmental structure in the NE-Region, but what is offered in the Legal Draft is a set of regions with devolved powers, still under a central presidential government retaining tight control over the regions. Such a weak and nominal council-system, even if acceptable to the other regions, will not satisfy the Tamils of the NE.

In fact, except for the provision of Sinhala and Tamil as Official Languages and English as a national Link Language, the Legal Draft does not anywhere specifically mention Tamil or Tamils, nor make any special efforts in order to console or reassure them, admit of past unfairness or guarantee their rights. The region where Tamils have lived predominantly for centuries is also treated just like any other region, ignoring the very reason why the 'new order' is being proposed. Even if the Government believes that through its Draft it is in fact legislating for equal rights to all ethnic groups including Tamils, that belief and position is unclear and invisible. The overwhelming impression of the Draft is that the ills of centralisation have been further reinforced, and it has been made more difficult for the Tamils to ever again fight for their rights, with or without arms.

Regional Boundaries

In the Draft, the units of devolution are undefined. The intention may be for the PSC to make recommendations. The Tamil wish is that the present NE- Province should form their separate or federal state, possibly with give-and-take adjustments where ethnic clusters exist in boundary villages. Is it not pettiness indeed to disallow the regions even so choose or change their names as they wish? Not that a change of name itself would make other rights automatically possible, but Sri Lankan Tamils would naturally wish to continue to call their region officially as Tamil EELAM, in the

RESPONSE BY UTHR(J)

A number of inquiries as to the authors of the reports of the UTHR(J) have been received. The main persons who are involved in these reports are H R Hoole and S Sriharan, both former teachers of the University of Jaffna. In reply to a recent statement by 27 academics (See TT Feb 96) from the now displaced University of Jaffna, the UTHR(J) has issued a lengthy response, extracts of which are reproduced without comment:-

"...We have the statement questioning the activities of the UTHR(J) which appeared in the press, signed by 27 members of the staff from the University of Jaffna. This is about the sixth in a series of statements over the last four years intended to discredit the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna). The tone has now risen to a shrill cry of `Anger and resentment' along with claims about us phrased in severe adjectives. Despite the quantitative rise of excoriation there has been no specific criticism of out facts or analyses. The recent attack again is mainly personal. The facts presented in our recent report, `The Exodus from Jaffna; October - November 1995' are very specific. This is now available in print along with other bulletins and statements pertaining to military operations in Jaffna. We have tried to present a fairly comprehensive picture of the suffering and the evacuation of civilians caught between the LTTE and the government forces. We said very specifically that the people who had moved into refugee centres in and around Jaffna were forcibly evacuated causing them and their animals enormous pain and suffering. To this end the LTTE used rumours, terror, shelling, and the forced closure of Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

This is not disputed in the statement in question. We have been very clear in our reports that people had been displaced from outlying areas by bombing and shelling that was callous and inexcusable. The point of the statement and of the 'anger and resentment' are not at all clear. It is quite apparent from the context of the statement that none of the signatories had actually read our report, but are rather responding to the commentary based on it, broadcast by BBC Tamil Osai, and the effect it was likely to have on people. The commentary was a translation of the original written by the BBC correspondent in Colombo.

The LTTE for their part had been very clear about the reasons for the forced exodus. For one, they did not want to 'lose their grip on the future generations." Refugees at St John's were told that they must leave because once the army enters they would let loose poison gas all over the city area. They have always maintained that they would never allow a rival Tamil group to run the civil administration in Jaffna. Our assertions are based on wider ranging testimony from those who went through the exodus experience, and also from facts collected by those in Jaffna who with all the odds against them value our work as a means to counter the politics of suicide imposed on them. They also include persons from the University. In doing this, they risk their life.

Rationalisation of the LTTE's behaviour are invariably the work of 'intellectuals.' To the ordinary people, however, it was as though fate had decreed that they too should suffer the indignity and tragedy of this exodus, which was very similar to what had been inflicted by the LTTE on the Muslims, 5 years ago, on the identical date of the same month, while others remained silent.

Spurious Legality

A questionable argument that has been trotted out repeatedly to assert the non-existence of the UTHR(J) is based on spurious legality. The reports are said

(conted. from page19)

same way that the Tamils of India call their state 'Tamil Nadu', officially.

The Referendum

The main facts to be ascertained by the proposed referendum are:

1.As an alternative to a separate state, what type of government would the NE-residents choose?

(a)A federal Autonomous State; or

(bAs in the Legal Draft,a devolved Regional Council, with as-yet-uncertain boundaries of the unit;

2.Which do they prefer as the unit for their regional government?

(a)The present NE-Province as a single merged unit;

(b)Redefined Northern and Eastern Provinces with two Councils to function under a larger NE-regional structure; or

(c)Demerged and redefined Northern and Eastern Provinces to function separately under the form of government chosen above.

Essential Pre-requisites

Before the suggested referendum, the following actions have to be taken by the Government urgently:

1. Making arrangements for all the refugees from the NE region to return to their homes. Arrangements must be made for Tamils abroad who cannot return home to vote in the referendum, for voting to take place in the countries where they have taken temporary refuge or residence. This step would be possible only after:

2. The return of all the armed service personnel to their bases in Colombo or at least to their barracks as before July 1995, after handing over the responsibility for law and order (as an interim measure, until the first democratic elections take place under the 'new order' in the NE) to the LTTE, to work with an International Monitoring Team. This would have to be obviously preceded by:

3. A fully-fledged Cease-fire Agreement between the Government and LTTE, to be monitored by the above Team, which will also later supervise and observe the NE-Referendum itself.

What the Tamils seek is a form of government to rule themselves independently in their traditional homeland in a separate state of their own or, as confirmed by the LTTE, in a federal state which will guarantee equivalent rights. Tamils want to provide and protect their own law-and-order and security arrangements, collect their own taxes, obtain international aid to develop their lands and resources as they deem fit, perform their educational and administrative activities largely in Tamil, and so on. They would treat their own regional minorities fairly, and want the Tamil minorities in the other states to be similarly treated. The Legal Draft now before the PSC is unacceptable to the Tamils as regards, inter alia, the failure to recognise the merged NE-region as their homeland, retention of the central hold on land, education, law and order, and the extent of devolved democracy for good governance. If the Government doubts what the LTTE presents as the wishes of the majority of Tamils of the Northeast, the best democratic course of action to follow, is to firstly ascertain the real facts in a NE-Referendum as suggested here.

to be the work of two staff members who ceased to be members of the University five years ago, who therefore use the name of the University of Jaffna in vain. They (the signatories to the statement) are understandably silent on why the two academics ceased to be on the staff of the University of Jaffna. Several of those who expressed their 'anger and resentment' in the statement under reference were members of the University Council that made the decision to discontinue them. It is not an event that they could be proud of and they certainly did not do it because the LTTE pointed the gun at them. While the authorities in the University of Jaffna were going through the motions of discontinuing them, senior officials visiting Colombo kept on telling Professor Aluvihare, who was then UGC Chairman, that owing to their association with human rights work, it was dangerous for them to report at the University. A former Chairman of the Jaffna University Council was questioned about their dismissal in Colombo in the presence of Professor Aluvihare. The Chairman of the Council in Jaffna maintained that the dismissal was wrong, and had indeed reminded the Council that one of the two had to flee Jaffna (he had narrowly escaped arrest by the LTTE and had first to go underground). But he had failed to record his dissent on the final decision. When pressed further, he said, "A Councillor said at the meeting that they (those openly active in the UTHR(J) cannot come here because they will be killed. Another Councillor shouted that they must be sacked. In the sequel the decision to dismiss was taken. As for me, I go with the majority, I believe in consensus." he then asked Professor Aluvihare to give him a letter requesting the Jaffna University Council to reconsider the decision, and went away. After the next meeting the Council replied. "The former decision stands." The reasons were not given and remain as mysterious as those for the original dismissal.

Professor Aluvihare urged the two of us concerned to write appeals to the University Council and in turn wanted the Council to allow the UGC to handle the issue. The Council did no more than repeat. "The decision...stands." Such abuse of academic power in a supposedly `autonomous' institution surely belongs to one of the darkest chapters. Legally, our case is still being contested by the Federation of University Teachers' Associations (FUTA) which agrees with out position. Although University Teachers Association (Jaffna) is also a constituent member of FUTA, it never contested the FUTA's stand. Without going into details, we would like to point out that a large number of teachers in schools and some staff members of the Eastern University had not been vacated when they were forced to leave. In comparison with the understanding shown to them. Our treatment was extremely ungenerous and utterly anomalous.

Like some of us were five years ago, the statement's signatories too are now in a position where their (forced) shift out of Jaffna has no legal standing and are effectively debarred by the LTTE from returning to the main University premises in Thinnavely.

Even if the government were to be vindictive and deprive them of legal standing, they would still earn the right to call themselves the University of Jaffna, and the world would recognise them as such, if they determinedly remain a credible voice of academics in service of the community. That has little to do with spurious legality. It is in this very sense that we continue to remain the UTHR (Jaffna), by keeping to the original aims and principles which we adopted at our foundations nearly eight years ago. That was when Dr Rajani Thiranagama, one of our moving spirits who was since assassinated, was with us.

Again no one has accused us of being untrue to the aims and principles reflected in our early reports. So far we have published 13 reports, 6 special reports and 9 bulletins. The first seven reports and 3 special reports were published when the two of us who continue to be openly identified with UTHR(J) were 'legally' attached to the University. What the signatories have revealed about the UTHR(J) is more an exercise in concealment. The same could be said at best about their statement's allusions to the Exodus.

Responsibility

While attacking the work of the UTHR(J) as one-sided we could safely assert that few, if any, of the signatories had read our reports, not even the recent one on the Exodus. The general attitude to our reports among our erstwhile academic colleagues is a fear that even touching them would be taken amiss by the LTTE. Our reports on the East have dealt mainly with the role of the State. We have had problems with getting these into the local press. Only one paper used our recent report on the Batticaloa District. Two earlier ones dealing with Jaffna were largely mutilated by the government censor. We have tried to offset these difficulties by going to sections of the foreign media and by posting several hundred printed copies. Several leading human rights organisations have valued our reports not because we are members of the University of Jaffna, but owing to their contents and analyses. We have a continual dialogue with such organisations that includes sympathetic criticism.

Some Realities

"There is a level at which the authors of the statement deserve understanding, if not sympathy. Hardly any of those who have signed are genuine sympathisers of the LTTE. The LTTE know that. Like with other institutions, the University too is run by influential individuals, several of whom used the LTTE for personal ends.

We must understand the utter hopelessness and despair resulting to a person living in Jaffna if he is to look at the situation straight in the eye. Hence he has to avoid seeing it straight and has to repress the truth. Such has been the conditioning that people at a meeting would automatically perform the ritual of praising the LTTE and delivering a scathing attack on the government. Today, they are all effectively trapped. The majority would be happy to get out if the whole family is given a pass to Colombo or to go back to their homes in Valikamam if there is a semblance of normalcy.

If those who signed the statement believe that our work does not serve the cause of the Tamils, do they believe that the LTTE's politics serves the Tamil cause? If so would they take responsibility for the resumption of hostilities in April last year and its consequence? Would they wholeheartedly support the present exodus? Would it not be more worthwhile for the Tamil 'cause' for them to explore the ways and means out of the present predicament rather than issuing statements and venting their anger on scapegoats? Can they not help the people to go back to their homes by talking to the opposing parties and creating a climate conducive to that end?

"We may make the point here that our criticism has never been directed against ordinary LTTE cadre or their families, whom we have always regarded as victims. But much, if not most, of our criticism has been directed against intellectuals and religious leaders whose opportunism and failings of character did much to cast the entire Tamil community into the grip of a terrible fate.

Again, Helmut Thielicke, reflecting on the Nazi regime that brought so much tragedy both within and outside his country, had this to say:

"As bitter folk humour expressed it at that time, of the three qualities, namely, being a Nazi, being intelligent and having character, one can have only two. Either one can be a Nazi and be intelligent, in which case one has character; or one can be a Nazi and have character,

INDIAN ELECTIONS 1996

T N Gopalan

It is indeed remarkable that India should be smoothly cruising into its 11th General Elections - despite the innumerable centrifugal forces working overtime and many regions being on the boil.

While in the Third World, democracy has generally been considered a luxury and notional, rather functional, democracy has been the norm, that India could provide a vibrant and technically correct Westminster model has indeed proved a bit of a puzzle to the observers, given the disastrous failures and tragedies which have overtaken the nation since Independence.

In such a context the 1991 general elections could prove a watershed in its history. The country could be in for a prolonged period of instability and the Congress will have lost its dominant position when the results are out, with no other all-India party to step into the breach.

Despite the all round forecast of a hung parliament, no one seems to be unduly alarmed - the nation will somehow meander on, everyone seems to hope.

Whether the incorrigibly fractious parties could really reconcile themselves to some long-standing coalition arrangement or the country will witness yet another round of mid-term elections before long, returning either the Congress or the BJP to power as the only feasible option, remains to be seen - just as it had happened when the much-looked for Janata experiment came crashing down in less than two years.

Of course Kashmir continues to be a source of anxiety. Lok Sabha elections have been ordered there too and are scheduled at nearly a month after the polling is completed in the rest of the country.

Narasimha Rao's gambit to have Assembly elections there a couple of months ago had failed because of his inability to offer any sensible package to fulfill the aspirations of the Kashmiris - not even a most pro-Indian politician like Farooq Abdullah would accept the Indira-Sheikh accord as a way out of the impasse. But now under the Supreme Court's pressure, the Election Commission and the Centre are reluctantly, half-heartedly, with a lot of misgivings in their minds, going for the elections to the Lok Sabha in Jammu and Kashmir. The cost involved both in terms of money and human lives is bound to be prohibitive.

But then that is into the future. What is of interest right now is Rao's gambit of facing the nation with the "hawala halo" behind him, projecting a Mr Clean-and-Mr Effective image, even at the cost of ruining the career of many of his close associates, and entering into alliance with such a discredited politician like Jayalalitha in the hope of sweeping the polls in her state at least whether it will all click and how far, will be keenly watched.

Rao has indeed achieved an amazing feat - that of remaining firmly in the saddle for the last five years. Though starting off as a minority government, through some deft operations, he has been able to convert the minority into a majority and consolidate his position both inside and outside the government.

Though he is bereft of any charism whatsoever and cannot win a single seat for his party on his own steam - barring some areas in his native Andhra Pradesh - and he would not think twice about doing in even the closest of his colleagues or toadies in his cynical pursuit of power, Rao still remains the most wanted man in the Congress.

A man who was preparing himself for retirement and was drafted in at the last moment by a quirk of fate to lead a very shaky regime - how eminently he has done the job could be seen from the fact that virtually no opposition is left in the Congress now. The once-northerners-dominated party is eating off the hands of a southerner who does not have any dynastic credential to speak of nor exactly is he a vote-catcher.

While Arjun Singh and company walked out two years ago, still groping for their way around and resorting to all kinds of stratagems to remain politically relevant, the last remaining voice of dissent was also suppressed when Mr G Karunankaran considered close to Moopanar, preferred to fall in line after some muted protests.

After all in the case of hawala, many a minister had to leave the cabinet under some very unpleasant circumstances, their reputation in question, if not in tatters, not even a man like Madhavarao Scindia was spared. Finally, Rao also decided not to give party ticket to any of the hawala-tainted leaders, dealing a body blow to their ambitions. Still none dared protest.

According to psephologists, the Congress would not be able to mop up more than 150 seats in the Lok Sabha. It is close to being wiped out in states like the UP and Bihar, slightly better in Rajasthan holding its own in Madhya Pradesh, gaining to some extent in Maharashtra and Gujarat thanks to Shiv Sena-BJP combine's discomfitures.

The south presents a very confused picture. One never knows what is in store for the Cong-I-AIADMK alliance, what with the revolt of Moopanar and downward trend in Jayalalitha's popularity charts, though right now what with Rajni's backing, the DMK-Moopanar combination seems to enjoy an edge. In Karnataka also Congress is in tatters. It may not be able to tot up even a double digit figure. In Andhra of course with the death of NTR and the split in the Telugu Desam, the situation is wide open. Whether Lakshmi Sivaparvathi does a Jayalalitha remains to be seen, but generally it is believed that the Congress will gain enormously. Orissa is another state where it could do decently though in West Bengal the Left Bengal Front is poised very comfortably as in Kerala. Not many seats are at stake in the North-East.

Such then is the scenario for Congress - not too bad given the equal precariousness of the opposition and Rao's "nego-

(Continued on next page)

(contd. from page 21)

in which case one is not intelligent; or one can be intelligent and have character, in which case one is not a Nazi."

We believe that by being true to ourselves, we could influence the international community and even the ordinary Sinhalese people. Only thus could we make the Government and the security forces accountable to the Tamil civilians and bring sanity into the drift.

We in the UTHR(J), which includes those who share our ideals and help us, but cannot and indeed need not, associate themselves with us publicly, felt that this was the minimum we could do. With this aim, and the change in our situation which followed the murder of our colleague Rajani Thiranagama, we have gone along as events carried us, with no lack of help from friends. We had no illusions of being popular. Obviously, we have stirred too many emotions, both favourably and unfavourably, for there to be an objective consensus about our work. That will come in retrospect." ●

AN AIR OF COMIC FALSE TRUTH IN MOOPANAR'S REBELLION

By G Ramesh

When prime Minister P V Narasi mha Rao took the decision to forge an electoral alliance with the AIADMK supremo and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha last week, he hadn't bargained for this. True, no-one had any inkling of what was about to follow. Jayalalitha was ha ppy, the DMK of M Karunanidhi took an "I told you so" stand and Congressmen in Tamil Nadu were sulking. The Tamil Nadu Congress leaders, who had been camping in Delhi to drive home the point that an alliance with the AIADMK would cost dearly for the party, were taking the flights back to Madras in a dejected mood.

All of a sudden on Thursday last, the pagan rituals of death, defilement and desecration came to the fore at the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee Headquarters. Its pathetic name of a Bhavan, kept after Sathyamurthy, a moderate and suave Tamil Brahmin leader of the late colonial era, lost all significance as cadres ran amuck. Death, because Narasi mha Rao was pronounced dead and his makeshift effigy, put together with gunny bags and waste cloth brought from near by automobile shops, was burnt down.

Defilement and desecration, because Narasimha Rao's cutouts were subjected to extraordinary slopping with cow-dung smeared chappals, lathis and stones. To be true and faithful to the act, the hundreds of Congressmen who assembled there had dropped the purist khadi and were clad in pants and shirts, with kerchiefs wrapped on their heads and lathis in hands. The mob had a point to prove to the Tamil media, which has recently been using the decent parlance of uruva bommai (doll figure) instead of the usual kodumpavi (sinful demon) while reporting burning of effigies in the Tamil public sphere.

Even as some leaders watched helplessly, Congressmen brought down Narasimha Rao's 60-feet tall cutouts (a la Jayalalitha style) and systematically destroyed them. In the epic Indian tradition, Narasimha Rao could well have been the gory Narahasura, who is ritually consigned to flames in the battle with Sri Krishna during Diwali every year. In the Tamil folk tradition, he could have been an imminent village God whose limbs are annually torn asunder. His mistake was having gone astray in forging the pavak koottani (sinful alliance) with the ruling AIADMK. Congressmen and women who rained blows on the Prime Minister's cutouts, prepared for the party's last August Madurai rally, were only washing away their sins in having gone along with their tormentor so far.

The destruction was, a terrible act of profanation, with Congressmen urinating on the Prime Minister's smashed cutouts in full view of the video cameras of private channels. Presspersons including some women were shocked by this act. Some of them later started terming the Congressmen as lumpens (who, of course, could not be genuine Congressmen etc!). The crew of Doordarshan, the official electronic media which makes a daily or even hourly darsanam out of the Prime Minister's face, didn't know how to react to the pissing act.

However, more was to follow. The last effigy was decorated with an angavastram as would the Prime Minister do whenever he visits Tamil Nadu. They drew a face on it, stuck a poster of Narasimha Rao with a half-burnt cigarette on his mouth. After the effigy was burnt down, the last cutout was brought out. A handicapped Congressman used his crutch as a vel to pierce Narasimha Rao's cardboard torso as if he was going through an act of black magic. Others, after continuing to pierce it with iron rods, ran away with the head and limbs as souvenirs.

The funeral procession was taken out, with Congresswomen wailed and heaped musical abuse, known in Tamil as oppari, on Narasimha Rao. The procession was taken out to the rhythm of a tandava dance performed by Congressmen. After a bonfire, they rejoiced: Drohi ozhindan (The betrayer has been annihilated). The remains, in true Congress style, were collected and a Congressmen told the video eye that he would be carrying them for immersion at the sangam of the three seas at Kanyakumari.

Such was the force of the above exorcist rituals under international media glare that Congress leaders of Tamil Nadu quickly realised the need to politically get rid of Narasimha Rao. Leaders like Union Ministers P Chidambaram and M Arunachalam soon decided that Narasimha Rao had become a liability in the state's violent public sphere. They were soon to quit and file their election papers as Moopanar candidates.

All this was because of the following

(Continued from page 22)

tiating skills". Many believe that he would be able to form a government even if he manages to score in the region of 160 seats. Anyway with the Janata Dal and the left parties firmly setting their face against the BJP, by default, Rao could still become the Prime Minister again.

The BJP is in dire straits. By pulling off the hawala racket Rao has pushed the Advani and his cohorts off their lofty moral pedestal. The arrest of a BJP MP in UP for arranging shelter to those involved in the Bombay blasts and the waghela episode in Gujarat fill the cup of woe for the party. The tall-talking Advani is out of the picture now and the moderate, pleasant Vajpayee is now its only hope. Still apart from the Hindi heartland and in the west one does not see BJP making much of an inroad elsewhere. The projected tally is hardly 120.

The third force, the Left Front-Janata Dal combine is not taking off at all. One does not see JD faring well anywhere in the North except in Bihar thanks to the charisma of Chief Minister Lalloo Prasad Yadav and to some extent in UP thanks to the support from the Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajvadi Party. Failure to bring the SP and Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP) - representing the Dalits and most backward castes - again could cost the secular forces heavily in the UP. The local unit of the Dal has actually split protesting the JD's decision to align itself with the SP only and spurning the BSP. Of course in Karnataka it should come up trumps, but in such states as Orissa and Maharashtra, the JD could do no more than make its presence felt.

The major left party, the CPM, is confined to West Bengal and Kerala.

In fine, with no party mustering an absolute majority of its own and wheeling-dealing of the worst most scandalous order in store, democracy in India is entering a very crucial phase. Whether it will emerge stronger or crumble under conflicting pulls remains to be seen.

A telling instance of the state of the polity is that no-one is able to identify the major election issue, liberalisation, corruption, development or none of these? No-one seems to know or care. Still at least 40-50 per cent of the 59 crore-strong electorate will vote and jockeying for power will resume. That is Indian democracy for you. ●

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logic. Narasimha Rao in Tamil Nadu, first, was an icon assiduously built by Congressmen who felt the loss of such great narrative icons like Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, when Narasimha Rao decided to join hands with the all pervasive hate-icon Jayalalitha, he metamorphosed into an asura icon to be exorcised; thus, his cutouts lost their signification and became cardboards, caricatures, first for his part- ymen and later for the people of the state; now, he can no longer exist even as a cutout in Tamil Nadu's public sphere, let alone carry political weight, he is unbearably light, a buffoon.

With this, the emotional ties between the Tamil Nadu Congressmen and the party High Command were snapped. The word High Command lost its militaristic significance and became a sound, or worse, just noise, for Congressmen. In stepped journalist Cho S Ramaswamy and G K Moopanar who executed a clean political manoeuvre to set the stage for a new alliance with the DMK.

Govindasamy Karuppiah Moopanar would seem to be the unlikeliest of rebels in Congress(I), a party, according to which, the word rebellion implies disgruntled action of some leader who has fallen out of favour of the presiding deity, who is usually a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Moopanar has been too close to the Congress(I) deities until Narasimha Rao, doing trouble-shooting acts in various states. Why did he rebel and form his new party and align with the DMK to defeat his parent party's alliance with the AIADMK?

To know the answer, Moopanar's background is important. He hails from a landed gentry family of Kabisthalam in the prosperous Cauvery delta. His family has been charged with practising extreme forms of feudalism and blocking the land reforms programme in favour of landless labourers. Moopanar had joined the Congress four decades ago and stuck it out with the late K Kamaraj who went on to oppose Mrs Indira Gandhi and her infamous Emergency in his last days. After the latter's death, Moopanar led his cadres to Mrs Indira Gandhi, knowing fully well that the Emergency had created problems for her party and government in the North. Moopanar stuck it out again, for the next twenty years, with the Congress(I) and his cadre base has survived the Indira and Rajiv eras. His renunciation of direct power in the government puts him ahead of other partymen. Only Narasimha Rao has been better than him in keeping a stance of calculated silence: Moopanar has never spoken in the Rajya Sabha of which he is a member.

Clad in simple kahadi dhoti-shirt, he chews betel leaves all the time and employs only spoken dialects of Tamil, Hindi or English in the public sphere. For the cultural public, he is a man of demonstrated penchance for art and a connoisseur of Carnatic music. Following the efforts taken by the late Bangalore Nagaratnamma, a devadasi-turned-publisher-turned saint, in reviving the Saint Thyagaraja Aradhana, Moopanar's family sorted out some problems and started holding the annual commemorative event at Tiruvaiyaru. Moopanar still heads the Thyagaraja Aradhana Committee and makes it regularly to the annual event at Tiruvalyaru every January. He took effort in setting up the Southern Zonal Cultural Centre at Tiruvaiyaru.

Moopanar is very quiet, shrewd and known to be dangerously manipulative in inner political circles. His closest allies are old Congress friends-turned-social workers, writer D Jayakanthan, to whom he presented a purse last year, and faithful businessmen. In short, he is a Kamaraj clone from the traditional Tamil elite. Obviously he cannot stomach the emergence of Jayalalitha, the former actress who is adept at palace intrigues like him, but, unlike him, also garish in her activities in the public sphere. True, Jayalalitha's cutout extravaganza had rendered the Tamil Nadu's public sphere into a veritable post-modern hell sans all sublimeness. It is also true that, through palace intrigues, Jayalalitha has managed to strike deals with MGR, Rajiv Gandhi and now Narasimha Rao. Hence, Moopanar's preference for Karunanidhi, whose history of activity in the public sphere has been relatively less garish, or Rajnikanth, who is garish in public sphere but is poor in enacting palace intrigues. Another reason for Moopanar's revolt against the alliance with Jayalalitha could be found in the emergence of Thevars, a conglomeration of hopelessly backward communities (who were once chieftains and robbers) mostly in the southern districts, as an economic and political force in Tamil Nadu during Jayalalitha's closest aide, Sasikala Nata- rajan, who also belongs to the Cauvery delta area, has been deploying all possible means to help her Thevar kinsmen get established as a bourgeoisie within one generation. So much so that former AIADMK minister S Thirunavukkarasu, a powerful Thevar leader with a mass base had resented Sasikala's hegemony over the community and left Jayalalitha six years ago, rejoined the AIADMK last month.

It is to be noted that neither Moopanar nor Karunanidhi are against Thevars or anyone aspiring to become bourgeiosie, but he would prefer the task to be done in an orderly manner, not by breaking set rules and procedures. The two leaders would rather let it be known that the bourgeiosie of all castes and kinship groups including the Thevars have a stake in ensuring that the rules are not furiously broken; and that the Thevar hegemonic groups cannot invite lawlessness and collapse of the current public sphere of Tamil Nadu.

It would be interesting, at this juncture, to ask some questions for the sake of intellectuals; what contemporary Tamil Nadu's terms of public sphere and culture are all about? It is an extremely complicated question, but the answer could begin by stating that medieval Tamil Alwars and Nayanmars had sacrilised the public sphere of the state with their enormously powerful Tamil bhakti poetry. What they have written down is a sacred geography of Tamil countryside, drawing, on the one hand, from the conventions of the classical sangam poetry, and on the other, from the polymorphously perverse folk ritualistic practices. (See an exhaustive historical work by Dr Indira Viswanathan Peterson including translations of the Thevaram in this connection. Poems to Siva: the Hymns of the Tamil Saints, Princeton University Press, 1989).

This sacred tradition continued well into the 19th Century, when poet-saint-alchemist Vallalar mediated successfully between monotheistic religions from the West and polytheistic practices in Tamil Nadu. With the arrival of Periyar E V Ramaswamy, desacrilisation of the public sphere began in right earnest. He completed the delinking of the classical and the sacred in Tamil and Indian culture. Henceforth, the classical was to be only historicised. Thus the way was paved for the loss of classical creativity. Folk forms, which are still popular and also sacred in the sense of being creative, are fast getting evacuated as they occupy the public sphere.

With no creative space to draw upon from, the state's public sphere is fast becoming a veritable circus of real-life statues. It's crashing icons are proliferating all the time. An icon of Narasimha Rao tries the bar act and miserably fails. And an unlikely rebellion from a suave figure like Moopanar has an air of comic false truth. (For a good account of palace intrigues as interiors and circus-like public spheres, read the following contemporary Tamil novel by Tamilavian, the pseudonym of Dr S Carlos, a Bangalore-based structuralist academic: Sarithirathil Padintha Nizhalgal). ●

CONFUSED PICTURE AS CONGRESS SPLITS IN TAMIL NAD

T.N.Gopalan, Madras

As the count-down for the 11th general elections begins, Tamil Nadu seems to present a most confused picture - multi-cornered contests on an unprecedented scale, a plethora of new parties and caste outfits, loyalties shifting at a dramatic pace from one end to another and so on.

However, easily the most sensational development is Congress veteran G Karuppiah Moopanar's revolt against the high command and floating his own party, now called Thamizh Maanila Congress (Moopanar).

This landlord-politician from the Thanjavur district has indeed done the unthinkable and the reverberations are bound to be felt in the State for a pretty long time to come.

He decided to revolt, walk out and launch a party after the failure of his pleas with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao against the reviving of the alliance with the discredited AIADMK fell on deaf ears.

Apart from the perceived general discontent with the Jayalalitha regime, the fact remains the monstrous corruption and the terror tactics adopted by her minions against the opposition have shocked even the most cynical sections out of their wits.

As Moopanar was to make a ringing declaration during the course of the revolt, some persons are debating the winning changes of this alliance. But my point is winning or losing, it will be unethical, against all canons of justice, to join hands with a party such as this."

The revolt is unthinkable in that Moopanar has always been considered a loyal foot-soldier of the party - though he had been humiliated a number of times by the high command in the past, he had always swallowed the insults, survived and managed to retain his clout.

Not a man with any great mass base to speak of but only reputed for his cunning manoeuvres and expertise in back-stage operations, Mr Moopanar, has been eminently successful in retaining a large flock of the faithful inside the party through a judicious distribution of the fishes and loaves of office. Whatever the ups and downs he himself might have suffered, he has taken care to see that his toadies sycophants are kept in good humour.

His general reticence " he seldom shoots off his mouth - and silent and effective execution of the assignments before him have generally tended to endear him to the successive regimes in new Delhi and that way he has also been able to cleverly establish a firm clout among many leaders of the party across the nation.

The man who was made general secretary of the all India Congress Committee in 1980 by Mrs Gandhi is indeed one of the most senior leaders of the party, but unfortunately for him he has not been able to make much of an impression over Rao, himself a wily operator and who has cut the ground from under the feet of many a regional boss in order to strengthen his own position. The simmering tension between them reached a climax in March this year when the Congress had to decide on who was going to be its ally in Tamil Nadu, the DMK or the AIADMK.

Ms Jayalalitha, arrogance personified, had been alienating the Congress workers and local Congress leaders including Moopanar through her acerbic gestures and statements time and again.

Unlike MGR who had the wisdom not to cross swords with the Centre - inasmuch as he had a lot of skeletons in his cupboard and would not run the risk of their being exposed - a modicum of uncertainty over his own future and some grudging respect for his rivals including Karunanidhi, the supremely complacent Jayalalitha never thought twice about running amok on any issue. Once in a rare moment of candour, Moopanar himself confided to a group of journalists, "Her arrogance knows no bounds. This is nothing but hubris, but she does not seem to be able to realise this fatal flaw in her character. Anyway I can't do any business with such a character, no way..." That was in 1992 July, a month before he launched his campaign for self-respect for congressmen, indirectly protesting the humiliating treatment meted out by the chief Minister to her allies.

With the ever indecisive Rao looking on, either helplessly or with some designs in his mind, the anti-Jayalalitha sentiments in the Congress gained momentum. Sticks were not wanting to beat her with anyway.

With another Congress leader, Vazhapadi Ramamurthy suddenly turning against her and Rao's hatchetman Dr Subramaniam Swamy also pitching into the fray, the anti-Jaya campaign became shriller and shriller by the day. A piqued Jayalalitha severed ties with Congress.

Meantime as film actor Rajnikanth came on the scene and a couple of opinion polls clearly revealed that her popularity was reaching an all-time low, Jayalalitha started quietly mending fences with the centre, with the very man whom she had almost called names - Rao's son, known for his weakness for women and other good things of life, Prabhakar Rao, came in handy and so did a Madras-based astrologer who worked on the father's weakness for gods, godmen and their plans for the lesser mortals.

Unusually this time round Moopanar decided to fight it out. Rao had been using him on trouble-shooting missions all along, but giving him a short shrift otherwise. Moopanar said, "Thus far and no farther." "If you want her, you will lose me," he warned the PM in no uncertain terms.

Though Rao did seem to be a bit unnerved and did everything to reassure Moopanar of his respect for him, he, however was determined to clinch the deal for two reasons - one he still believed that her charisma could deliver a minimum of 25 Lok Sabha seats on a platter; secondly Jayalalitha would come forward to foot most of the election expenditure without bothering him too much.

He was also much hooked on her that Rao even sabotaged the chances of Rajnikanth's possible entry into politics and campaigning for the Congress, by deliberately dithering on the issue and driving the impatient actor up the wall.

When the actor called it quits he turned round and asked Moopanar "what now?" But the latter was not deterred. He was able to rope in Karunanidhi, the leader of the DMK. Abandoning his known or professed anti-Congressism the DMK leader, itching to have one last go at the Fort St George, expressed his willingness for talks with Congress.

But Rao had already made up his mind. Alliance with the AIADMK was the only feasible option, he argued and went ahead.

The Moopanar loyalists erupted in anger. They ran amok right inside the premises of the Sathyamurthi Bhavan, the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee headquarters, defiling Rao's cut-outs and burning them. Moopanar returned from New Delhi and initiated talks with Karunanidhi. Rajni Kanth, away in the US intervened on his behalf and noted satirist Cho Ramsaswamy carried his message to the DMK leader. Finally Karunanidhi agreed to part with 40 Assembly and 20 Lok Sabha seats to the Moopanar faction.

(Continued on page 32)

READERS FORUM

BULLETS & BORDERS

I refer to the article "Bullets and Borders" by Nikki van der Gaag, reproduced from the NI. While correctly recognising the undermining of the sovereignty of the state by the multi-nationals and cartels, the writer has failed to note the importance of the national liberation struggle in combating imperialism, i.e. monopoly capitalism. I agree that nationalism is no end in itself and the nation-state is no panacea for the ills of oppressed nations and people and that nationalism is used in the most cynical way by right-wing governments to preserve their power at home. Interestingly, politicians who exploited nationalism to the full in serving their political needs, notably Thatcher and Reagan, also undermined the nation-state, especially the aspect of the welfare state that served to protect the weakest sections of the population against the greed of the invisible few.

The writer's description of 'imagined nationalism' fails to discriminate between the positive role of nationalism during the struggles for independence and the cynical manipulation of national sentiment to justify oppression of national minorities and other ethnic groups. Cuban 'nationalism' has been a positive force in history for the past several decades and the 'nationalist' struggle of the Zapatistas of Chiapas helped to weaken the corrupt regime in Mexico. The struggle for the liberation of Eritrea was instrumental in the overthrow of the oppressive regime in Ethiopia and has enabled the Eritrean nation to venture along a path for economic reconstruction, in defiance of the IMF, and it is not those who are fighting for the liberation of the Kurdish nation, with its territory divided between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, who are propping up the oppressive regimes in Iraq and Turkey.

The 'Third World' has not really enjoyed full sovereignty despite winning 'political independence' from the colonial masters. Economic freedom has been slow to come and whenever a third world country dares to reach out for that goal, the multinationals and the western governments that serve their interests, irrespectively of the party in power, and international bodies under their control are quick to intervene.

The writer makes rather disparaging comments about 'separatists' with scant attention to issues that lead to stru-ggles for secession. What is involved in most instances is the struggle of a people to preserve its identity, which I think is a good thing, and that is in defiance of the monolithic global culture of disposables goods advocated by the multinationals. What oppressed nations and ethnic groups want is the right to self-determination, not necessarily secession, and to deny that right is to support oppression.

The writer's alternatives to the tatters of the nation-state include decentralisation in place of separation and the use of technology for positive change. I wonder who is standing in the way and do not see how the just struggles of oppressed nations and socio-ethnic groups are against these ideals. "A world based on democracy, decentralism and tolerance" has a number of preconditions which the writer has avoided talking about and include the right of people to preserve their ethnic identity and determine the pace at which they choose to change their way of life.

The writer has overlooked another ugly consequence of the withering of the nation-state in the west, namely the emergence of racism and neo-fascism. Sadly, oppressive nationalism is not dead, but is changing its composition and political style to serve the needs of an elite.

S. Sivasegaram
47 Camberley Avenue
London SW20,

PEOPLE'S PLIGHT

Untold suffering has been brought to the people by both the LTTE and the Government by pursuing a policy through the barrel of the GUN, while both are saying that they are doing everything in the interest of the people. They do not realise the suffering they are creating for the people and that every one of their actions has an equal and opposite reaction. I would appeal to the Government as well as the LTTE to stop all military action and try to find a peaceful solution to the problem. Unless the Government wants to use the devolution package as a propaganda weapon only, they should pursue the devolution package to a final conclusion, so that the bickering for the last 40 years can come to an end and the economy of the country can be improved. The LTTE too should stop military means and find a solution to the suffering of the people and even put up their views on the devolution package in order to bring an amicable solution to the problem.

K Mailvaganam
Canberra, Pearce ACT 2607
Australia

POLICE DETENTION

Thank you for publishing my letter on the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) in your February 1996 issue. After I mailed that letter, my father had informed me that he was released only after our good Sinhalese neighbours Ekanayake went to the police station and vigorously defended my father against false allegations made by the law enforcement officials. Through your columns, permit me to openly thank our Sinhalese neighbour of 25 years for helping my father out of such a precarious situation.

This incident raises another serious question about the safety of Tamils in Colombo. Can every Tamil residing in Colombo be so fortunate to have such a kind Sinhalese neighbour like my father has? Suppose if Tamils in Colombo do not have such civic-conscious Sinhalese neighbours, then one can imagine what is in store for them in the so-called democratic Sri Lanka.

Sachi Sri Kantha
5-16-305 Tsukimicho, Fukuroi City
Shizuoka 437-01, Japan

FORGIVENESS AND PRAYER

Finding out that David Thiagarajah had died in a terrorist attack in Colombo was like having a knife stuck in me and having it twisted. We were best mates from when we were five to when we were sixteen: his being a Tamil and my being a Sinhalese did not enter our consciousness.

The first communal riots in the 1950's were significant for both of us. His father offloaded goods and precious jewellery to my father and to our household and departed with his family to seek safe refuge. Even then David and I could not understand why this was happening. We were just two friends who cared for each other and did not understand politics. In 1993 we discussed the possibility of hostilities ceasing within our lifetime. Unfortunately this was not meant to be, certainly not for him.

My concern now is who will care for the widow and children. Does politics allow for this, does the Government pay compensation to victims of terrorists? How about the balance of payments being affected since no more trade is coming in via David's expertise?

Sad and subdued as I am, the only solution I can think of is forgiving the terrorists unconditionally and praying together with existing Christians for a nation under God. Jesus Christ, the One who gives us access to God, is the Supreme Head over all, above politics and ethnic differences. I see no other way, no other hope.

Nick Bandaratilleke
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BOOK REVIEW

THE SECRET FILES- BRITAIN WORLD WAR II AND THE SAMA SAMAJISTS

(Edited by Wesley S Muttiah and Sydney Wanasinghe, A Young Socialist Publication, Colombo - 6 January 1996)

Review by Professor Bertram Bastiampillai

In the mid 1940's when expectations were high and it became clear to the people of Ceylon (Sri Lanka since 1972) that independence was nigh, the eve of the General Elections of 1947 was a time of hectic political activity. Foremost among the contestants who loomed large in the political horizon were the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist Party.

But the greater focus was rivetted on the Sama Samajists because many of their leading personalities had been associated with anti-imperialism and the struggle for freedom during the Second World War and in the years immediately thereafter.

The present attractively assembled collection of documents, most of which were not earlier made available to the reader by the Public Record Office (PRO) London, shed valuable light on the contribution made by the Sama Samajists in awakening public awareness of and in galvanising relentless activity among labour so that there could be much needed popular contribution toward Ceylon achieving freedom from Colonial Servitude.

The documents are afforded titles and in most instances the authorship of the contributions is indicated. As a result the work of the researcher on this critical period in Sri Lanka's march toward independence is rendered easier. The collection comprises an assorted variety of documents and a fuller story of the left movement in the Island, and especially the role of the Sama Samaja party during the later years of the thirties and in the first years of forties, is lucidly and elaborately unravelled. The reader gains a vivid and salient insight into the aims and objectives of the Sama Samaja movement. The bold and adventurous Suriyamal movement, the stand of the Sama Samajists on national issues and the divergence of the Sama Samajists from other left movements get illustrated in the first six documents authored by Doreen Young, Covin R de Silva and Leslie Goonawardena. The criticism of the British Administration, the plight of the plantation workers and the demands of labour are shown explicitly through documents 7 to 9.

The critical attitude of the Sama Samajists toward the war and imperialism and the panicky reactions of the colonial administrators and their accomplices in the Island are best understood from documents 10 to 20 in particular. The collection contains not only the proceedings of the State Council on the subject but also the communiqué sent by the Colonial Office (London) to the Governor, the detailed response of the Governor, the "man on the spot," the internal correspondence among those at the Colonial Office and articles on the impact of the war on the Island in the Journal of the Sama Samajists (Samadharmam). An interesting account on the anti-war and anti-imperialist sentiments that were current among the leftists unfold before readers' eyes.

The consequences that get detailed in the later documents, especially 19 and 20, could have been easily anticipated. Similar sort of events could be traced in the neighbouring sub-continent during these times.The leaders of the Sama Samaja party were taken into custody under new regulations announced by the Governor but, still as documents such as 19, 20, 21 and 22 show, protests against the British were widely articulated forcefully. An outcry against the actions of the Governor and the British Government is emphatically raised. It was announced according to document 23 that the Sama Samajaya would be published from time to time by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), and the language used in it is vitriolically strong.

Many of the documents that follow deal with the detention of the leaders of the LSSP and belong to 1940. Students are urged to unite under the banner of the party. Similar appeals are made to members of the Ceylon University College and undergraduates are beckoned to join the protest rally in August 1940. The leaders of the LSSP were an educated elite and were particular in rallying the support of the Island's educated groups

.The LSSP protested against the use of Rupees. Two Lakhs of public funds of the Colombo Municipal Council in the cause of "the unjust imperialist war."

Document 40 launches a scathing attack against the Mayor Goonasinghe, and he is condemned for having failed to provide essentials for the people while frittering away public funds on someone else's war fought for defending the English Empire. Down with the Empires! May the Revolution to victorious (or successful)! Similarly the next document alleges that "Galle's honour" is sullied. Once again the Municipal Councillors get denounced for contributing the People's money toward preserving the British Empire.

The Urban Councils of Pana- dura, Moratuwa and Kotte are also accused of donating "money for murder" the diatribes ends with the usual cry that the Empire should perish and the revolution should end victoriously.

The contribution of public funds toward the pursuit of the war was indeed contentious. Mr S W R D Bandaranaike, the Minister for Local Administration too exhibited a reluctance to donate such funds much to the chagrin of the Governor. The Governor indeed pondered at one time whether he could dismiss the Minister for his unco-operative atti- tude.

The different stages of the detention, protests against it, and the Colonial Government's justification of its action are revealed to the reader through documents 45 to 49. The Colonial Office assesses the support for and opposition to the war as it was profoundly disturbed by the popular level agitation organised by the LSSP. Since one of the aspects of principal focus in these documents is World War II they give to the reader a sharp and clear understanding of varied reactions in Ceylon toward it.

Document 50 presents a lively indictment of the conduct of the Police in these years. The Governor's preference in accepting the version of the Police Chief instead of that of the Board of Ministers and in a like manner the rejection by the Governor of the finding of Coomaraswamy on the shooting of Govindhan are quoted as examples of the Governor's partiality. Most of the documents that follow deal with the high handed repressive Police activities, the Government and the Colonial Office's reactions to them, and the LSSP's condemnation of the later. There are interesting details on Ceylon during the war secretly submitted by the Governor to the Colonial Office. Added useful information on the thinking and stances of the Colonial authorities could be glanced from the documents that embody comments of the official in the Colonial Office. Document No. 65 gives details in regard to civil defence measures adopted in Ceylon. The penalties for offences are modelled to a larger extent on those in force in the

United Kingdom which were harsh and/ or strictly severe.

The final three documents in this highly informative collection which is indispensable reading for anyone wanting to know the history of these eventful years deal with the famous 'jail break' of the Sama Samaja detenus from prison. The scene portrayed provides sensational and real life drama of an incident which is not only important but also has become an integral part of legendary love. It is good material for a film!

The Succinct and illuminating preface by Bernard Soysa with a comprehensible touch of nostalgia who commands an intimate understanding and close knowledge of the personalities and events dealt with in this book makes the task easier for the reader to follow the vicissitudes of the story. Behind all the ceaseless and courageous activity lay the struggle of a dedicated lot of leaders and followers to end poverty and oppression and to institute democracy, socialism and human values."

The thorough and carefully crafted Introduction by Muttiah and Wanasinghe enable the reader to follow better the vital role that the LSSP played in our National life during those years and the drama of stirring times.

It also may be of some interest to the reader of this eminently valuable collection of documents to glance through this Reviewer's "British Reaction to the Left and Labour unrest in Sri Lanka during the early years of the second World War" based on documentary sources in the Public Record Office, London, published in the University of Colombo Review Volume I No. 4, December 1984 (pages 65-78).

Finally we have to express our appreciation and gratitude to the editors of this collection for the immense service they had done to help understand more clearly and in the correct context an important phase in the history of our country.

SRI LANKA: CENSORSHIP UNDER THE PRETEXT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

On 2 April, ARTICLE 19, The International Centre Against Censorship, publishes 'Silent War', a report on the operation of censorship during the military offensive in northern Sri Lanka in late 1995, and other freedom of expression concerns. Just over a year after coming to power on a platform pledging an end to the culture of censorship that plagued Sri Lanka, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga herself imposed formal censorship under emergency regulations for three months, while the military denied journalists access to the northern war zone. The censorship denied the public access to information on major humanitarian and human rights issues resulting from the war and extended way beyond any legitimate concern for protecting national security.

Formal censorship was imposed in September 1995. It was lifted three months later, but only after the military had successfully gained control of the northern city of Jaffna in a major offensive. Today, journalists continue to be denied access to the north, including areas where hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced by the fighting now live.

Inconsistencies abounded in the manner in which the formal censorship was applied. Comment on censorship itself was cut: stories readily available in the international media were barred from domestic publication; the censors even at times introduced their own figures into reports of casualties. Of even greater consequence, however, was the fact that journalists were unable to observe the war and its effects on civilians themselves, increasing their dependence on official information in their war reporting.

According to Frances D'Souza, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19, "The government appeared intent on projecting an image of a `clean war' with minimal impact on civilians. Many of those displaced may have fled their homes on the orders of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which then controlled Jaffna, rather than as a direct result of military action. But it was also alarming to see the government attempt to control reporting of the numbers involved and the hardships they endured; the government's verbal attacks on humanitarian organisations which reported on civilian casualties resulting from possible violations of humanitarian law were also of serious concern."

In 1995, the UN Human Rights Committee again urged Sri Lanka to address outstanding human right issues, including introducing proper safeguards on freedom of expression. Frances D'Souza comments: "It is precisely in times of crisis that governments most need to be held accountable for their actions, something which is impossible without protecting the public's right of access to independent sources of information."

The government has said that it intends to introduce its media reforms in 1996. ARTICLE 19 urges it to do so without delay, and to ensure that any barriers to the flow of information on human rights and humanitarian concerns are lifted, including by ensuring journalists access to the north.

For further information, please contact: Catherine Drucker or Malcolm Smart (ARTICLE 19, Tel: 0171 713 1357, Fax: 0171 713 1356)

ARTICLE 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, promotes freedom of expression worldwide, and defends the victims of censorship.

SRI LANKA: A BITTER HARVEST

The election of the People's Alliance government on a 'peace and human rights ticket' in August 1994 was seen as an expression of hope - hope that after 15 years of violent conflict a settlement would finally be reached between the government and the Tamil militants of the LTTE in the north and east, and that the human rights of all people in Sri Lanka would be protected.

'Sri Lanka: A Bitter Harvest' explains the background to the war, in a clear and highly readable account. The report highlights the sources of conflict between the Sinhalese majority and minority Tamil population, yet also features the plight of the other Tamil community - the Up Country Tamils - who remain the most impoverished on the island, and the Muslims - who are increasingly drawn into the war.

In the context of the conflict, the author Elizabeth Nissan, details the minority grievances over development within Sri Lanka - maintaining that far from benefiting the minority communities, minorities have either been ignored, or been adversely affected by certain projects. The report also studies the island's education system, demonstrating how education can foster prejudice.

'Sri Lanka: A bitter Harvest' ends with a series of recommendations. It is MRG's hope, that if these were acted upon, they could assist towards building the peace which the people of Sri Lanka so desperately need.

An indispensable resource, which will prove of great value to academics, lawyers, journalists, development agencies, governments, minorities and all those interested in minority rights.

Minority Rights Group
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London SW9 7DE, UK

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu *seeks partner for his nephew, 27, British citizen holding British degree and accountancy qualifications presently working as an expatriate abroad. M 843 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu uncle *seeks attractive educated bride under 30, resident UK for British qualified computer engineer nephew, 34, in UK employment. Send details, horoscope, photo. M 844 c/o Tamil Times.*

Tamil Hindu sister *seeks partner for unmarried lady doctor, 40, employed in South Africa, Singapore citizen. Send details. M 845 c/o Tamil Times.*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Balaskanthan *son of late Mr. Kanagasabai and Mrs. B. Kanagasabai of 'Kokulam', Kadduvan Junction, Tellipalai, Jaffna and* **Subashini** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. M. Santhirasekara of 61 Station Road, Kokuvil on 20.3.96 at 'Miami Reception Hall', Alexandra Road, Colombo 6.*

Daniel *son of Professor and Mrs. R.B. Brown of 2250 Bryden Road, Columbus, Ohio, USA and* **Nalini** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. V.S. Balendran of 82 The Glade, Shirley, Croydon, Surrey, UK on 23.3.96 at The Langham Hilton Hotel, London W1N.*

Dr. Thiagalingam *son of Mr. & Mrs. P. Namasivayam of 5 Courthope Road, Greenford, Middx., U.K. and* **Sumita** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. A. Gnanarajah of 99 Jalan Terasek Satu, Bangsar Baru, Kuala Lumpur on 24.3.96 at the Dewan Jubli Perak Sultan Abdul Aziz, Jalan Persiarun Sultan, Shah Alam, Malaysia.*

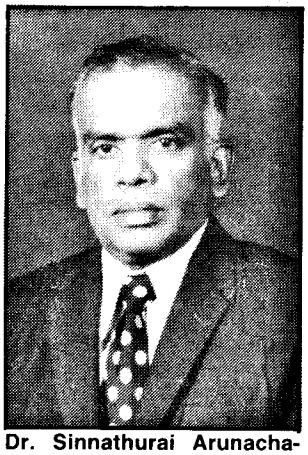
Raveendran *son of Mr. & Mrs. Kathiravelu and* **Anusha** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Satkunanathan of 9A Revell Road, Kingston, Surrey on 24.3.96 at Tolworth Recreation Centre, Tolworth, Surrey.*

Gugathasalingam *son of Mr. Vaithilingam and late Mrs. Vaithilingam of Kuppilan, Jaffna and* **Swarneswari** *daughter of late Mr. Poopathy and Mrs. Poopathy of Kurumpasiddy, Jaffna on 6.4.96 at Shree Ghanapathy Temple, Wimbledon, London SW19.*

Haleem *son of the late Mr. M.S. Ossman and Mrs. S.Z. Ossman of 45 Fleming Mead, Mitcham, Surrey and* **Manjula** *daughter of Mr. Vythilingam and Dr. Vathsala Paramanathan of 28 Avonmore Gardens, Avonmore Road, London W14 8RU on 20.4.96 at 'The Gloucester', Harrington Gardens, South Kensington, London SW7.*

Aravinthan *son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Rajaratnam of 65 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Apt. 1512, Toronto, Ontario M4H 1L2, Canada and* **Niranjani** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. M. Muthulingam of 4301 Kingston Road, Apt 1119, Scarborough, Ontario M1E 2N1, Canada on 21.4.96 at Sky Dome Banquet Hall, Downsview, Canada.*

OBITUARIES



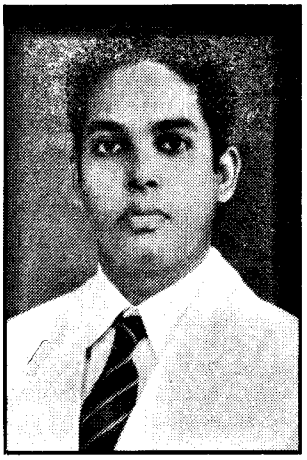
Dr. Sinnathurai Arunachalam, *Consultant Eye Surgeon, Jaffna; beloved husband of Amirthavally; loving father of Thiruketheeswaran (Accountant, London), Dr. Thirunavukarasu (Ophthalmic Surgeon, Wales, UK), Shiyamala (P.N.G.) and Anushiya (Engineer, Singapore); father-in-law of Malathy (Solicitor, London), Deirdra (UK) and Thillaiampalam (Accountant, P.N.G.) expired in Wales on 26th February 1996 and the funeral took place on 29th February. The Anthiesty was held in Reigate on 27th March and the Thanksgiving Prayers and Lunch took place at the London Sri Murugan Temple, East Ham on 30th March.*

The members of the family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes, expressed their sympathy in person, sent messages of sympathy and attended the thanksgiving prayers and lunch. They regret their inability to thank individually – 114 Runnymede, Colliers Wood, London SW19 2PH. Tel: 0181 542 3358.

Miss Gnanaledchumi Kanthia *of 51 Waite Davies Road, Lee, London SE12; born in Alaveddi, Sri Lanka on 23.3.1934; beloved sister of late Nagammah (Alaveddi), Arumugam (Paranthan), Packiyaluxumy (Canada), Kulasingam (Australia), Thanaluxumy (Colombo) and Gunasingam (Australia); sister-in-law of Sivasubramaniam (Alaveddi), late Rasamalar Arasaratnam (Canada), Sivanayaki (Australia), Mahendralingam (Colombo) and Ranjini (Australia) passed away on 25th March 96 and was cremated at the Lewisham Crematorium on 4th April 96. The family wish to thank Patricia Mohonaraj for looking after their beloved until her final days. Telephone Mohan 0181 942 3993.*

Mrs. Arunthathy Kandiah *of Alvai, resident of Wellawatte, Sri Lanka; beloved wife of late Chellapah Kandiah, retired Supt. Telecommunication Engineer; precious mother of Pushparatnam (Baba), London UK; Satchithananthan (Kannan) Wellawatte, Sri Lanka; Sharvanandhan (Appan), Birmingham, UK; Punitharatnam (Archi), New Zealand; Ranjitharatnam (Ranji) Brighton, UK; Kailasananthan (Kyle) California, USA and Saravanabavananthan (Sara), California, USA; loving mother-in-law of Moorthy, London, UK; Gnana, Colombo; Aruntha, Birmingham, UK; Perinpanayagam, New Zealand; Ramadas, Brighton, UK; Kala, California, USA; and Vasanthi, California, USA; loving grandmother of Shankari, Nimo, Shantha, Vignesh, Jananni, Brindha, Myuran and Briana passed away on 25th March 1996 at Wellawatte, Sri Lanka.*

We thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral and sent messages of sympathy – K. Sharvanandhan, 'Katperham', 39 Fitzroy Avenue, Harborne, Birmingham B17 8RL. Tel: 0121 420 4786.



Dr. K. Sivaloganathan. *formerly of the Cement Factory, KKS and Water Board, Sri Lanka; Lecturer, Ahamadu Bello University, Nigeria and University of Coventry; eldest son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Kathirithamby of Uyarapulam, Anaicoddai; beloved husband of Maheswary; loving father of Dr. Sivapal (Canada), Dr. Jeyabal and Leela; father-in-law of Sumathi and Andrew; grandfather of Dharshan, Myra, Serena and Arjun; brother of Saraswathy, Sivasothinathan, Jegatheeswary, Jeyaledchumy, late Jegasothinathan, Balachandran and Chandrajothy; brother-in-law of Puvaneswary, Pathmavathy, Mangayatkarasi, Dr. Rajasooriyar, Dr. Puvirajasingham, the late Dr. Nadarajah*

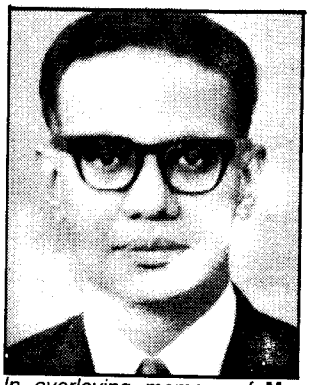
and Naguleswary passed away on 15.4.96 and was cremated at the Putney crematorium on 20.4.96.

His wife and the members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent mesages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in various ways during the period of great sorrow. – 18 Eton Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT3 5AZ. Tel: 0181 949 0220.

Mr. C. Rajasekaram (Retired Police Sergeant) of Kalviyankadu, Jaffna, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Amuthamany; loving father of Vimalarani Kulasekaran (Canada), Pushparani Nagendran (Colombo), Pavalarani Bhuvanendran (Canada), Jeyarani Sivabalasubramaniam (Pandatheruppu), Lailarani Selvackadunco (UK), Chandrasekaram (Beba) Jeyamalar (UK) and Lalitharani expired on 17.3.96 at Nunavil, Chavakachcheri and was cremated on 18.3.96. – 74 Lansbury Crescent, Dartford, UK. Tel: 01322 293053.

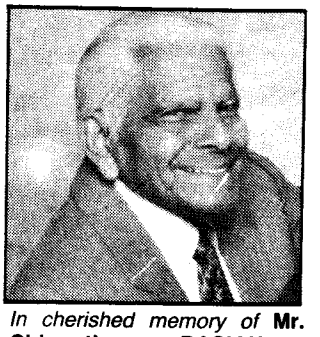
Dr. Thomas Chelvarajah (Retired Consultant Dermatologist. General Hospital, Colombo), beloved husband of Grace, son of the late Rev. & Mrs. G.D. Thomas and son-in-law of the late Dr. & Mrs. J.V. Thambar, brother of the late Rajadurai, late Rasamany, late Thavamany, Dharmarajah, Thevarajah and Soundramany and brother-in-law of Dr. Sam Jonathan, Paul and Dr. Isaac Thambar and the late Caroline, late J.P. Thurairatnam, Daisy, Rasamany and the late J. Rajasingham, expired on 15th December, 1995. His remains were cremated privately according to his wishes on 16th December. – 40 School Avenue, Nawala, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka.

IN MEMORIAM



In everloving memory of **Mr. Vellupillai Nadarajah,** formerly Director, Ceylon School of Social Work, son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Vellupillai of Chetty Street, Nallur, Sri Lanka; son-in-law of the late Mr. K. Muthulingam and Mrs. Muthulingam of Tellipallai, Sri Lanka on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 4.4.91.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Muthu Ambikai; daughter Sakunthala; son Ravindran; son-in-law Suresh Thayalan; daughter-in-law Meera; grandchildren Arjun, Nisha and Sathiya. – 11 Baronia Croft, Highwoods, Colchester, Essex CO4 5EF.



In cherished memory of **Mr. Chinnathampy RASIAH** on the second anniversary of his passing away on 24.4.,94.

This day dawns with sad regret
Of the one we loved and cannot forget
Just as he was, he will always be
A beautiful thought in our memory
Resting where no shadows fall
Fondly remembered by us all.

Greatly loved, deeply missed and always remembered by his sorrowing wife Gunamany, sister Arianayagam, beloved children Ranjan and Rajini, loving daughter-in-law Janaki, son-in-law Lakshman, grandchildren Thabojan, Prashanth and Sulakshan, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces. – 14 Greenbriar Avenue, Wheelers Hill, Vic. 3150, Melbourne, Australia/3818 Campolindo Drive, Moraga 94556, California, U.S.A.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 1 Pirathosam.

May 2 to 5th: Border Crossings presents an English play **'Bravely Fought the Queen'** at Waterman's Art Centre, 40 High Street, Brentford, Middx. Tel: Box Office 0181 568 1176.

May 3 Full Moon.

May 5 6.00pm **Bharatha Natyam Arangetram** by **Jane Tharani,** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rasaiyah of 18 The Spinneys, Bickley, Kent at Ashcroft Theatre, Fairfield Halls, Park Lane, Croydon. All Welcome. Tel: 0181 467 1479.

May 6 9.00am **Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation** presents **Football & Netball Tournament** at Douglas Eyre Sports Centre, Copper Mill Lane, Walthamstow, London E17. Tel: 0181 520 5876.

May 11 Thirunavukkarasar Guru Pooja.

May 13 Eekathasi.

May 14 Feast of St. Mathias.

May 15 Pirathosam.

May 16 Feast of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May 17 Amavasai.

May 18 Feast of St. John.

May 21 Chathurthi.

May 23 Shashti.

May 26 Pentecost Sunday.

May 27 Feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury.

May 27 9.00am **Festival of Cricket** organised by Sri Lankan O.B.A.s in UK at Norman Park, Bromley, Kent. Tel: 0181 949 8883.

May 27 9.00am **United Tamils Organisation** presents **Tamil Cricket & Netball Festival** at Wadham Lodge Sports Centre, Wadham Road, London E17. Tel: 0181 503 4294.

May 29 Ekathasi.

May 30 Pirathosam.

May 31 Vaikasi Visakam; Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary.

At Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/ 4608.

May 12 6.30pm Bharatanatyam – Ritushringara by Padmaja Suresh from India.

May 18 7.00pm Banshi a dance ballet by Anjana Banerjee and troupe from India.

May 19 6.00pm Carnatic Vocal by Students of Mrs. Sivasakthi Sivanesan.

May 27 7.45pm Kuchipudi Dance by Shobha Naidu and troupe from India.

TAMIL PAGES 1996

A comprehensive directory of Tamil Commercial and Social organisations in the UK was ceremoniously released on 24.3.96 at the Merton Hall, South Wimbledon, London SW19 at a function at which Dr. T. Raj Chandran, Commissioner for Racial Equality, UK was the Chief Guest. The hall was filled to capacity.

Several prominent members of the Tamil community were present along with editors of Tamil newspapers and magazines and extolled the editors of the directory for their services and the free issue of the publication. They wished that next year's edition would carry details of similar organisations in the rest of Europe. Dr. & Dr. (Mrs.) Raj Chandran congratulated the editors for their efforts and presented a cheque as a token of their appreciation.

Tamil Pages 1996 is a free publication available from the British Tamil Directories, 52 Kingsley Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8HF. Tel: 0181 543 2126 on the sending of a cheque for £1 in its favour for each copy to be sent to the addresses in UK to cover postage and packing.

CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Weather: *Snow continues into April. The annual sales of Vancouver daffodils reminds us that Spring is on the way!*

SACEM: *The Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities elected the following office bearers at their Annual General Meeting held recently.* **President:** *Gladys Hoole,* **Vice Presidents:** *Padmini Dharmarajah and George Coomaraswamy,* **Secretary:** *Naga Ramalingam,* **Treasurer:** *M. Velauthapillai,* **Editor:** *Kumar Ratnam,* **Committee:** *M.A. Jesudasan, K. Balakrishnan and C.K. Ketheeswaran,* **Chairpersons:** *Dr. Pushpa Seevaratnam (Family Support), Dr. T. Vasanthakumar (Fund Raising) and V. Sivasubramaniam (Rehabilitation of Law Offenders).*

The Society also hosted a forum on 17.3.96 at the Mid Scarborough Community Centre to provide a two way communication between the Judicial Police and other service providers. Hon. Judge David Cole, Dr. T. Sooriyapalan and Suda Coomaraswamy representing the service providers participated in the forum presided over by Dr. Pushpa Seevaratnam with Jayanthy Reynold as the co-ordinator.

Suresh Manickvasagam Trial: *The trial of Suresh, President of The Tamil Movement of Canada detained under the Immigration Act from 18.10.95 for allegedly being a member of the LTTE which Immigration Canada believes is engaged in terrorism was taken up for hearing on 19.3.96 before Mr. Justice Max Teitelbaum and continued for six days before being adjourned for 9th April 96.*

On the opening day of the trial, Professor Jordan Paust of the University of Houstan testified that an organisation purportedly promoting a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the Sinhala and Tamil nations of Sri Lanka is not a terrorist organisation. He reiterated that the Tamils have a common ethnicity, culture and religion and under the U.N. Charter are entitled to the right of self determination which is also recognised by the international community.

Professor Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois, the second witness told the court that the British forced two separate states to unite and when they left, the government was a remnant of colonisation. He said that the Tamils have the right to take up arms to defend their territory and expel the enemy. He added that they have the right to receive support including weapons from outside. Others who have testified are Karen Parker, attorney who is a specialist in International Law and Human Rights; Dagmar Wellman Rajanayagam of the German-Malaysian Institute in Kuala Lumpur and former Associate Professor in Asian History at the University of Kiel, Germany and Professor Peter Schalk of Sweden. Mr. Sam Duraiswamy, President of the Tamil Eelam Society also testified. It would appear from the court proceedings that the Eelam issue has shifted from Sri Lankan soil to the Concrete Court Houses in Canada. Eminent Canadian Barristers Barbara Jackman and Lorne Waldman together with US attorney Visuvanathan Rudrakumar appeared for Suresh.

An International Conference *on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was held in Toronto during the week of the Suresh court trial. Besides Dr. Dagmar Hellman Rajanayagam, Professors Francis Boyle, Peter Schalk and Attorney Karen Parker who testified in the trial, there were Professor Bruce Mathews of Acadia University, Nova Scotia; Professor Robert C. Oberst of Nebraska Wesleyan University and Professor Chelvadurai Manogaran of the University of Wisconsin. The conference echoed the same sentiments expressed in the trial. The panelists however emphasised the need for the LTTE to improve its international image, by strict adherence to the Geneva Convention.*

The World Cup Cricket Victory of Sri Lanka *was received with mixed feelings. There was no doubt that the result had given the much needed boost to Sri Lanka. It was felt that the end to the horrible war there would give a still better image.*

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

The Sydney University Tamil Society (SUTS) *was established in 1991 under the auspices of the university. Since then it has rapidly expanded in its membership and its activities. Its main aim is to foster Tamil language and culture, by organising activities among its members and the Tamil community at large. The other activities include the Unifund Project to provide assistance to the universities in the North and East of Sri Lanka and the publication of 'Kalappai', a quarterly Tamil magazine.*

To promote the study of the language and culture, SUTS conducts competitions in poetry, oral communication skills, speech, literary writing and debates which it is hoped would result in greater awareness and understanding. This year's competition which was held on 30th March drew an audience of over 500 and raised over 3600 dollars. All participants in the competition were presented with a 'Certificate of Participation'. The best individual performers and teams were awarded 'Memorial Shields' donated by Tamil Organisations and public spirited individuals.

(Continued from page 26)

It is indeed a stunning blow to Rao who would not have expected a man like Moopanar to revolt nor cadres desert the party en masse the way they have now.

The official group was thus hard put to find enough candidates for the 30 Lok Sabha and 66 Assembly seats. The only solace was TNCC president Kumari Ananthan crossed over from the rebel faction, though union ministers P Chidambaram and M Arunachalam decided to stay put.

At the time of going to the press, it was clear that the Congress AIADMK alliance was going to have a tough time at the hustings and the DMK Moopanar CPI combine enjoyed a clear edge.

Karunanidhi does not seem to be too very much bothered by the desertion of the Pattali Makkal Katchi or the Tiwari Congress led by Vazhapadi Ramamurthy. He is exuding confidence through his every pore.

The PMK and Tiwari group are left out in the cold, failing to find a place in any of the two major groupings not even in the MDMK-CPM alliance. While Vazhapadi cooked his own goose by playing the role of the irrepressible leader a bit too strongly and PMK by overestimating its own strength and playing hard-to-get. The two have now forged a front of their own. Dr Subramaniam Swamy the man who claims to have started it all finds no takers in any of the groupings and has to content himself with joining hands with the federation of Devendrakula Vellalalr Associations (DVF), a Dalit front.

The fact remains though that mainly the battle is between the AIADMK-Rao Congress and the DMK-Moopanar Congress. Whether the split in the anti-Jaya votes would enable her to return to power and how far the revolt of Moopanar would cut into the traditional Congress are matters to be watched with keen interest. ●

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Kalappai, the Tamil quarterly is published by a group mainly of students. Its target readership is Tamils of all ages, while its principal goals are to promote the Tamil language and to give an opportunity to budding Tamil writers to express themselves along with the more experienced writers in the community. The annual subscription is 15 Australian dollars.

The Unifund Project was launched in response to requests for assistance from the Jaffna and Eastern Universities. The aim of the project is to (a) Supply books and journals to the libraries of these universities. (b) Provide financial aid to the students through bursaries etc through the Vice Chancellor's Welfare Funds. (c) Supply equipment (computers, audio-visual aids, laboratory equipment etc). (d) Encourage overseas academics; medical, scientific and technical professionals to take up honorary teaching positions and to exchange ideas with their colleagues. The society communicates directly with the Vice Chancellors of these universities and remits funds by bank transfer to their Welfare Fund Accounts. The following has been achieved (a) 93/94 Shipment of donated books (approx $26500), 94/95 Medical books to the value of $620, 95/96 Direct funding of $15000 to the Jaffna and Eastern Universities. (b) Computer (486 DX66) & printer, value $3500 to the University of Jaffna. (c) Contribution to the Jaffna Science Association $1500. (d) Contribution to the Dept of Psychiatry, University of Jaffna $1000.

The Society would appreciate generous contributions and would like to know how other overseas similar organisations function and aid these universities in North East Sri Lanka.

Please contact Vasuki Tel: (02) 642 3639. Fax: (02) 736 1803.

The Tamil Senior Citizens' Association of Sydney *made an appeal to the Australian Government to intervene and bring about an immediate cease-fire in North and East Sri Lanka, and ensure the safety of the people rendered homeless. A request was also made for urgent action to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees. The Prime Minister and other ministers acknowledged the Association's letters and briefly stated that a sum of $500,000 has been approved as aid and also that the government is prepared to bring about a negotiated settlement. The association has made a contribution of $1250 towards the TRO Emergency Relief Fund in aid of the refugees in North Sri Lanka.*

British Churches Appeal For Help to Tamils

A petition of over 300 signatures of British Christians across the UK was presented by Dr. Julian Pedley, Chairman of HOMSA to **The Hon. Mr. Jeremy Hanley** *the Foreign Minister, through his Desk Officer for Sri-Lanka at the Ministry of Foreign & Commonwealth Offices in Whitehall on 7/12/95, urging the British Government to do all it can to bring about a just and peaceful settlement to the 13 years of civil war in Sri-Lanka. The delegation of 5 members of the HOMSA Executive Committee expressed their deep concern at the cost of human lives and suffering the innocent civilians had to endure in a climate of uncertainty and fear where there was a severe shortage of food, water and medicines, imploring the British Government to encourage free access, independent information and adequate relief in the North of Sri-Lanka.*

The delegation from HOMSA also met with the Sri-Lanka High Commissioner His Excellency Mr. S.K. Wickremesinghe in his offices in London on 8/2/96 voicing their grave apprehensions as to the situation regarding the refugees and beseeching the speeding up of humanitarian assistance.

HOMSA – Hope Outreach Ministries South Asia *is a British based Christian Charity that has been seeking to bring reconciliation and relief in several meaningful ways, through the nationals of Sri-Lanka & South India over the last ten years. Amongst its many practical projects are Rural Medical Clinics, Foster Parent Programme, Clergy Retirement Homes and Vocational Training Programmes, working across the ethnic divide in all parts of Sri-Lanka amongst both Tamils and Sinhalese, bringing hope and relief to disadvantaged and marginalised people.*

Dr. Julian Pedley – Public Health Consultant and former Health Chief of Milton Keynes together with the General Secretary, Dr. Sam Muthuveloe have been doing the rounds of several churches and groups encouraging prayer and material support for the several hundreds of thousands of refugees who have been displaced following the recent Sri-Lanka Military offensive ironically code-named Operation Sunshine!

The HOMSA Rural Medical Clinic in the North of Sri-Lanka has been overrun with refugees fleeing the military theatres of conflict, now taking shelter in the adjoining church, with the HOMSA workers on the ground needing to care for several hundreds of displaced persons, providing them with food, clothing, and basic medicines. The human suffering, emotional pains and physical needs are immensely great considering the meagre resources of both personnel and material that is available on the ground.

Dr. Pedley and Dr. Muthuveloe were interviewed on two occasions by **BBC Eastern Counties Radio** *on prime listener time, discussing the refugee crisis and making an appeal on behalf of the displaced persons, for a reconciliation of the conflict and relief for the refugees.*

Kingston Institute Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

The Kingston Institute of Tamil Culture celebrated its 10th Anniversary and the Tamil New Year with two entertaining evenings of Cultural shows in The Holy Cross Convent School Hall in New Malden. The Mayoress of Kingston, Iris Grinder, the local Member of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Richard Tracey M.P., Anita Pollock M.E.P. and Sister Elizabeth of Holy Cross were the Chief Guests.

Children between the ages of 4 and 17 took part and produced some excellent dance, drama and musical items. Mr. Tracey, paying a glowing tribute to the Institute, said it was enriching the Kingston Borough with its wonderful culture.

The Kingston Institute of Tamil Culture was inaugurated on the 19th April 1986. It now has over 120 pupils, 15 staff and several volunteers. Lessons are held at Holy Cross Convent School, Sandal Road, New Malden, Surrey on Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm. Classes are open to all.

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